

He said 'Goodnight' but stayed
by Quiet-garden

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Summary: A modern Hijack AU, in which Hiccup can't shake the feeling of being followed. Jack has developed an unhealthy, unrequited attachment to the lonely but clueless teenager and is invisible to him, until one day he isn't. Stalker Jack Frost and Long suffering Hiccup. You have been warned. :'D

1. Chapter 1

**Based on the song "Goodnight and Go" by Imogen Heap. Those lyrics are actually terrifying. **

**They are responsible for this whole creepy mess. **

* * *

><p>The awkward little shuffles that constituted the teenager's dance steps along the barren, lamp lit street that day on his way home from school was what caught his attention in the evening:<p>

That Auburn hair, bobbing and bouncing as he sang tunelessly, blissfully unaware of his acute tonal deafness beyond gigantic head phones. He was obviously entranced in a woman's song, as his voice strained to reach the higher notes, but he went for it all the same, bathed in the shallow yellow light of looming halogens overhead.

The shadow that perched atop the concrete neck of the light couldn't contain a small, unadulterated grin, never in all his time following the boy had this occurred. He'd seen him other days, occasionally stopping at the local cafÃ© to apparently collect his usual from a salty hook handed man. Other times the kid would just head home, bobbing his head to the monotonous thud within his ear phonesâ€¦ But this sound. It rose, fell, chimed and was much more up beat than usual, and the mood was apparently contagious. It spread through his stick like limbs until they waved without abandon, clumsy feet rising on to the ball and hopping lightly from paving stone to paving

stone.

This sight made the shadow laugh out loud, and he hung by his legs from the lamp post's bar, white spikes suspended in calm winds that let him drift down. He landed silently behind the boy, a good two paces or so. Watching. Following him as he always did, so close but unable to reach out for the youth before himâ€| Always just a touch away. So he did what he did best, and the only thing he could do:

He leaned forward when the dancing teen came to a stop, searching for his door keys, and blew a kiss very lightly against the back of that slender little neck before him. Pale lips pulled back in satisfaction when hairs bristled on the freckled skin, a warm hand darting up to cover the cold patchâ€|

Just like he'd had to in that same spot. For the last two weeks. Hiccup shivered, removing his hand and wondering whether someone had buried a body beneath his porch without his knowledge recentlyâ€| Or whether someone was repeatedly walking over his grave. This thought chilled him further than any fickle breeze, but the teen sobered, jangling his keys as he headed up the steps and slid them into the heavy lock on his front door. He slipped through the portal, habitually dropping his rucksack next to the shoe rack and slammed the oak door heavily with a reassuring clatter. His shadow didn't follow him, but chuckled silently, slipping up to the first level of the rather grand town house.

The air outside was chilly, but what else was new? He headed upstairs, turned left at the landing and stepped into his fairly tidy room, rubbing ruddy hands together to stimulate the circulation to his cold fingers. It had seemed a little icier than usual, causing him to skid and slide down the hill more than a handful of times, but Hiccup had been determined to keep his balance, especially when he'd met up with his friend Astrid, who would offer no end of ridicule if he face planted one more time on his way to school. She was athletic, kind for the most part, but the Auburn teen's lack of physical prowess was a rich source of amusement for his flaxen haired companion.

The sharp tingle of blood rushing to his fingertips signaled that it was probably safe to get changed into his comfies as he always did after a long, torturous day of academia and Phys Ed. He'd already showered in the locker rooms, so he could forgo one tonight: he flicked on the lamp and reached lethargically into his drawers. A pair of sweat pants were withdrawn, printed with an oddly ostentatious slogan along the leg. He unbuckled his belt listlessly, slinging the pants onto his hastily made bed, yawning as he let them drop easily to the floor and made to pull off his sweat shirt.

It was half way over his head when a tiny creak made him freeze, warm breath quickening against the thick wool that covered his face. A minute wind swept its icy fingers over the prominent vertebrae in his back, causing Hiccup to pull the sweater quickly past his chin and off, rounding to findâ€| An empty window. His heart thudded in a hollow chest, but rounded eyes swiftly narrowed in annoyance at his own stupid paranoia. Since his bed room was higher up, Hiccup often left it open a crack to ensure the space aired through out the day.

Flushed, freckled cheeks filled with air.

Trudging over to the window, he sighed and examined the sash frame, swearing he hadn't left it so wide this morning. Exhaling out of the window, the breath caught in the still air and clouded for a moment before dissipating. A small swallow bobbed his Adam's apple, but he turned away, noting that he had yet to pull on his sweat pants.

The shadow drummed his non corporeal fingers against the wide, inviting sill, leaning against the white painted frame with an easy confidence. Frozen blue eyes lingered on the bold print on the boy's overly large sweat pants, reading 'Dragon Tamer', trailing up and over the slight, freckle dusted shoulders, before they were disappointingly confined beneath the folds of a loose, beige t-shirt.

"OK, Hiccup, keep your cool. It's not like anyone can even reach this floor!"

The boy rubbed his forearms briskly, casting another quick glance out of the window, but shaking off the feeling slunk out of his room and down the stairs.

"May as well catch my show until Dad comes home."

Tracing dents left in the carpet, the silent visitor crept behind Hiccup as he felt his way down the dark stair case, grip tight on a polished, mahogany hand rail, until he hopped off the final step and was unknowingly mimicked. Veering right into his spacious but sparsely decorated living room, Hiccup habitually flicked on the numerous lamps and reaching for the remote, plopped heavily into a plush, leather couch. He finally relaxed and hummed in pleasure when the opening credits of his Reptile documentary faded in. This was what after school was about: unwinding alone, nestled snugly against the thick, furry throws that littered his huge sofa, finally allowed to breathe.

Reclined, comfortable, the boy put the volume up while a soothing British voice set the scene, conveying the habitat of the Komodo dragon with his deep, calm baritone. Lids dropped a fraction over Hazel green eyes, the epitome of contentment.

Carefully, an elegant arm draped over the sofa back, pale fingers careful not to graze his host's skin. Bare feet tucked beneath him, his own lids dropping as he learned about the Komodo's signature venom and vicious claws. The way it hunted, stalked its prey, striking in a way that belied its humongous frame.

The silent guest couldn't help but comment casually to his oblivious companion, stating that he could take on one of these creatures with no sweat. Asking questions about the ageing presenter, why did the boy always watch these things? That, OK, the camera work was pretty cool, but why were all these shows set to classical music?

"Surely Rock would suit a lizard like this more?" He bantered, not expecting a reply. When the credits finally rolled up, streaking white against black while the announcements for the next show blared, Hiccup got up, stretched, scratched the back of his head and flicked off the set, standing in the quiet for a moment. The sky outside had darkened considerably and now tiny pin points pricked the inky blackness with their distant glow.

Hiccup stepped over to the tall windows and drew heavy drapes across them, knowing his Father would complain if they were open when he got home. A buzz vibrated against the boy's leg and he dug into his loose pocket, withdrawing his phone, unlocking the screen to open the SMS. He scanned it briefly, sighed, and shoved the device back into his pants.

"Missed his trainâ€| _again_. Quel SurprisÃ©." Groaned the teenager, traipsing towards the kitchen, knowing he'd be dining alone again tonight, unaware of the willing dinner partner at his heels.

After digging some left overs onto a plate and grabbing a soda from the fridge, the hungry teen settled at his dining table, today's paper opened at the crossword page. He had grabbed a pen from the dresser and now, with his food largely ignored, chewed its cap in contemplation.

"Seven downâ€| 'To be tracked'." Muttered the boy, tapping the pen against his philtrum, humming thoughtfully.

The other party had coiled into a chair opposite, staring just a little longingly at the forgotten meal, trying to recall the last time he ate. He couldn't. A glance was cast over at the monochromatic grid. He quickly leapt up again and circled the back of the youth's chair, as he had a hard time reading upside down.

He spread his arms to rest on the table's polished top, hovering over the boy's hunched shoulders, stretching his brain. The pen left its home between Hiccup's teeth and hesitantly poised over the first blank box, noting earlier answers that overlapped the potential solution twice:

U and D._

Frost bitten fingers raked through icy strands in vexation, feeling useless and ineffectual in this situationâ€| Until inspiration struck like lightning, buzzing behind the giddy little ghost's eyes.

"I have itâ€| I have it!"

Excited, he leaned over and whispered gently into the soft, round shell of his puzzled host's ear, breathing a single word.

"_Pursued_?" Whispered the teenager quizzically, another chill running down his spine when an alien thought entered his mind from seemingly nowhere. He glanced at the grid, found it fit and jotted down the letters in a broad, clean upper case. Satisfied that the puzzle was complete, he folded the paper and remembered his meal, deciding to take a bite of his cold chicken sandwich, pulling the aluminium ring on a coolly perspiring soda. Its hiss echoed the helpful spirit's wispy laugh.

"You're welcome." He mused, observing the boy while he took a long slug of Appleade, and the sigh of relief when his parched tongue was finally quenched.

When the last of the sandwich was packed away, and his plate took up residence in a brushed steel sink, the boy slunk back upstairs,

hefting his discarded rucksack heavily over a shoulder on the way.

From outside his window, the moon shone clear and cold, a silver, pockmarked disk hanging silently in the calm night sky. It had risen a fair bit, indicating that time had slipped away much faster than he had thought. Glancing at his home made alarm clock, the glowing green digits indicated that his assumption had been correct. The weighty bag dropped once again by the foot of his bed, Hiccup sat down on the edge, mattress only mildly protesting under his slender frame. The springs remained silent when his little shadow joined him, lips pursed when the teenager cradled his head in tense hands.

"Something the matter, Kiddo?" Queried the ghost, his voice as light as a moth's wing. Tired green eyes meandered over to the bulky rucksack before closing, and Hiccup flopped back with a huff.

"Aah.. I already finished that essay at lunch," He recalled to no one in particular, within the hearing range of a someone. "And the History test isn't until Friday." He finished with a yawn, knuckles kneading the corners of his itching eyes.

"I think I'll call it an early night for once!" Take a break." Hiccup drawled, arms stretched over his head, causing his t shirt to ride up above his outie belly button: Another little quirk the visitor was fascinated to find the first time he'd followed his friend home. Unable to resist, he prodded the navel sharply, causing the boy to double over with an involuntary giggle, bemusement painting his rounded features.

"I'm glad to hear it, Brainiac," commented the shadow slyly, but his eyes were tender. "You work too hard!" You know that old saying: All work and no play-"

"-Makes Jack a dull boy." Completed the sleepy teenager as he crawled up his bed, recovered from the odd tingle in his belly. He was honestly starting to get concerned. Maybe he was coming down with something, or had a nervous problem. Most likely it was nothing, but still. He pulled back the blue duvet sluggishly, sliding his tiny frame between the crisp, cool fabric and heavy cover, face moulding itself instantly into a goose down pillow. The Boy spread his spidery limbs, sprawled ungracefully on his stomach. He lay like this for a moment, before suddenly remembering the stuff in his pockets. Grumbling into the make shift muffler, Hiccup fished in his pants until he withdrew his phone and MP3 player, clumsily clicking it into a bedside dock and pressing play, music quietly filling his room on its usual sleep timer preset.

The Phantom youth uncoiled himself from the mild shock he'd experienced, the fact that his friend has completed his idiom still rattling around in his brain. What had it meant? Was he finally getting through to someone? Was he gaining power? Or was Hiccup just more receptive?

A long-bloodless hand dragged itself down an equally gaunt face, craning to see the drowsy teenager fiddle with his iPod and start a chilled, low tempo song to help him sleep. The arm dropped onto the mattress with a tiny bounce and soon an even rhythm had established itself, in both the song and Hiccup's soft breathing. He wasn't sleeping yet, but he was beginning to drift off.

Cautiously, the nervous ghost crawled up the bed, hovering on his intangible hands and knees over the dozing boy, staring intently. He licked his lips with a dusty tongue, voice cracking as he tried to whisper.

"Hey there, Hic. You might not know me, but I kinda know youâ€| But, hey. I'd really like it if you got to know me." He rambled, not sure why he was bothering in the first place. It would be the same, even after centuries of practice, learning the tricks, attempting everything to try and be noticed, but to no avail. Dry lips were chewed with immaculate teeth.

"But, if you'd like to, you know, ever get anything off your chest, I just want you to know somewhere deep downâ€| You're not talking to yourself." He dipped his head down a little closer to his prone friend's ear, making an effort to be heard, for real this time.

"It would be great, if we could meet, face to face one day." He concluded, ready to straighten up... When Hiccup, in his sleep, rolled and actually bumped the ghost's arm, shocking him into stillness.

Blearily, green eyes cracked open and focused on the pale figure above him, a small, lopsided smile stretching his pink lips. "That'd be coolâ€|" Mumbled the boy, still half asleep. "Be nice toâ€| Talk lizards andâ€| Puzzlesâ€|_Mushrooms_."

Hiccup yawned wide and long, showing that despite their crookedness, he took care not to cultivate cavities. A particular little birdy would be pleased to know this, pondered the petrified Spirit briefly, before returning to the current, unbelievable situation. His cold heart sputtered into life, long forgotten, but now thudding heavily against his ancient rib cage. Peppery brows twitched as he leant back down, so the stirring boy could hear his not so silent voice.

"Wait, right now, what do you hear? Do you hear me?" He interrogated gently, coaxing Hiccup ever so slightly from his slumber, but not entirely. Fine lashes fluttered lightly above appled cheeks, his stray hand rubbing his clavicle thoughtlessly.

"MmmHm?" a non-committal hums, eyes barely slits now, fighting against consciousness for all they were worth. Oh no, Not this time Sandy, not this time._

The Ghost surprised himself when he managed to actually grab a set of tiny shoulders, containing them in his chilly palms. "Can youâ€| Feel this?"

A minute, listless nod as Hiccup tried to settle good naturedly back into his pillow. The sand was taking effect and he hadn't even noticed.

Stupid!

"All right, that's good!" Whispered the distraught spirit urgently, seeing his thread back into the world begin to untwist, threatening to snap at any moment. "But, just before you goâ€| Can you see me?" He choked, barely containing the panic that stifled his pleading tone. Hiccup had settled back, breathing even again, lips parted and

inhales smooth.

As his grip loosened on skinny shoulders, the sad little ghost settled back, straddling the sleeper's stomach weightlessly, unsure of what to do. He stared at the peaceful face before him for a moment, lip trembling in a way it hadn't done for countless years. He was so close this time, he could almost taste it. He experimentally (but dejectedly) reached out to try and brush back his unwitting friend's auburn fringe, having tried and failed many times before. What had occurred was probably just a fluke. It wasn't like he hadn't been able to carry sleeping children before. Fingers set to graze thick strands, and he braced himself for the chill of phantom phasing-

When the hair actually moved. It fell gracefully back from the teenager's forehead: A small flicker of eye lids, the slightest tug of his mouth.

A small, golden shimmer shone behind those restless lids for the briefest second, blue eyes trained on the vanishing light like a hawk. The teenager's lips parted just a fraction more to breathe out a muddled but legible sentence.

"Catchyaâ€| Pizzaâ€| later, Jack?"

'Jack' could not contain the terrified flutter in his dormant belly, not sure of what to do with himself. Fists balled, finding their sudden solid qualities unusual and unwieldy. He took extra care to roll off the boy's body, never having to worry before when any motion would pass through him, not felt by Hiccup. It had been oddly reassuring. But now.. Now. He wasn't sure he could take the real thing.

Jack knelt at the boy's side, watching him sleep from his usual spot, heart heavy. The thing he'd craved for so long, had eluded him all these yearsâ€| Scared him. He shuffled closer to the head of the bed, looking directly down on to the blissfully unaware countenance and sighed shakily. What would he do?

What could he do?

The steady rise and fall of Hiccup's chest indicated that he was thoroughly asleep now, and Jack bent down, nervously, never having to worry about waking his companion before now when he did this.

He pressed his blue lips chastely against the pink ones, holding them there for a sweet moment before regretfully pulling away. He had expected the boy to fly awake and strike him, Instead, a pleasant reddening of the cheeks informed the boy's dream, possibly translating into something much more normal within his adolescent mind.

"Good night. See you in the morning."

Jack backed slowly up to his ledge, where he would also sometimes wait until dawn, staring upwards at the blinding light that the moon wrought upon him. The promise lingered in the air like a curse, words driving themselves into the ghost's fragile psyche like a mallet would nails.

Not bothering to ask any questions, and expecting no reply, the ghostly youth drew a knee to his chest and watched the stars glimmer up in their lofty homes, wondering whether to return the next day.

* * *

><p>This isn't over by a long shot, but I hope you enjoyed it anyway. : 'D**

**_Thanks so much for reads and reviews are hugely appreciated.

_**

Q.G. Xx

2. Chapter 2

Five days had passed and the doorstep tingles seemed to have stopped, much to Hiccup's relief. Perhaps he had just been imagining it after all, and on the sixth day the boy practically bounced downstairs, catching his foot on the final step and stumbling, stubbing his toe on the skirting board. He bit back a yelp and blinked back the sting, hobbling as casually as he could to the kitchen, his Father pouring himself a mug of coffee from the freshly brewed pot.

"Morning," he called deeply to his son, casting the smallest glance in the limping boy's direction. "Skirting board again, eh?"

Passing the well stocked fruit bowl and selecting an apple, Hiccup sheepishly smiled and polished the fruit on his shirt. He nodded meekly, taking a bite. His Father chuckled, plodding back over to the table and placing the neatly folded paper on Hiccup's side, settling his impressive frame into an inadequate looking chair. He smoothed down his beard carefully, somehow making that flaming mass look semi presentable.

"Well, just try to be careful in the futureâ€! Listen," he began, setting down the mug by his plate of mackerel and eggs. "There's a new project brief being presented today. I should be home no later than eight but-"

"Don't wait up, got it." Chirped the boy, nibbling at his own fish while he scanned the daily puzzle page of '_The Guardian Post_'. There was a good variety of hints in the crossword today, some answers obvious even at a glance, but there was one that caught his eye, a long column that stuck out like a sore thumb with few overlaps. Eleven down. Interesting.

Beeping soon rang from the teenager's wrist, signalling that he was probably already late for school. Scoffing down a few more mouthfuls of egg, Hiccup hurriedly wrapped his skinny arm around his Dad's broad shoulders and squeezed briefly before he dashed into the hallway to collect his book bag, calling out over his shoulder.

"I'll get something from Gobber's for dinner, so don't worry!" Damn, was that really the time? Where was that algebra- yes. There it was. Zip pulled securely shut, keys ready, it was about time for another thrilling day of triple mathematics, Social economics and, Joy of Joys, phys ed.

"Love you!"

Stoick drained the last of his decidedly bitter coffee as the thick slam of his heavy front door caused the pictures to rattle along the hall way. Just another Tuesday then.

Xx

From his usual perch on a high tree branch across the street from that sizeable town house, the ghostly youth widened icicle-shot eyes when the oaken door pulled open to reveal a familiar skinny school boy wrestling a huge rucksack across his back. He craned his pencil neck towards the hallway.

"_Love you_!"

With that, he hopped down the stepsâ€| On to the forgotten patch of ice that glistened on the pavement. In a moment, Jack forgot his troubles when the teenager skidded panic stricken across the treacherous slick. As usual, it was a near miss, the gangly teen collecting himself at the last moment and keeping his footing. The sight never failed to amuse the lonely spirit who left the 'present' there occasionally to keep Hiccup on his toes. He stifled a laugh, black edged nail clamped between his impeccably white teeth. He prowled up the branch and languidly lay against the bark observing his clueless friend as he checked himself over, bare foot swinging idly below the wooden limb.

Eventually, the startled teenager cursed mildly and continued down the hill to meet his long time friend, 'Astrid'.

Cheek in hand, Jack tracked Hiccup's progress down the hill until he was no longer visible from his vantage point. He had followed the teen a few times to different places or activities that he frequented, picking up a few scraps of knowledge here and there, one of which included the friendship of a blonde girl named Astrid. She and Hiccup had apparently been friends for years, going by the fact she often referred to events that happened to them in kindergarten. She was strong, athletic and actually quite pretty, all legs and blonde hair. The fact they were friends had confused the ancient youth at first, who had been witness to many relationships in his time.

These two had physiologies and personalities that were completely at odds with each other, but somehow they gelled, making up for the other's downfalls. Hiccup had re-explained Pythagoras to his friend on the way to school more than a few times before any big calculus test, or Astrid had assured him that she'd definitely pick him for her Dodge ball team. It was kind of nice.

But Jack hadn't felt like going to school today and instead sprawled on the bough, considering his next move. He had been deliberating this point for the past five days, ever since the night that he had discovered that his friend could possibly see him. He'd ran a few experiments on other people recently, certain that he was still invisible to the general public. In all likelihood, the boy had only momentarily believed he existed in the thrall of a dreamâ€| But if he hadn't?

Well. Even Jack knew that first impressions count for everything.

XX

Nursing bruises on his arms from vicious rubber balls that even Astrid couldn't deflect, Hiccup trudged up the hill in a foul mood. He was tired, sore and wanted nothing more than to just get home and feed his pet, Toothless. The little garter snake didn't eat much, but had recently finished digesting his weekly mouse, so it was time to take one out of the freezer for him. The common misconception that snakes were slimy that always bothered Hiccup, who often enjoyed having his scaly little pal draped around his neck while he worked or coiled on his lap while he watched his documentaries.

The boy had saved Toothless from his surprised Father's shovel one summer day, insisting that his breed was harmless, despite their rapid movements. Stoick had been doubtful at first, but soon found that the pair shared an oddly therapeutic relationship, so he let him stay, provided the boy kept tabs on him at all times.

The memory tugged his mouth up at the corners, and when he saw his window from the verge of the Hill, the reptile enthusiast partially jogged the rest of the way. To find two bare feet sticking out from his porch, the rest of the body concealed behind a low, staggered brick wall. They were dirty, pale and unmoving.

Leaping Lizards, someone had died on his doorstep and had his shoes stolen.

He ran then, skidding to a halt in front of the steps (the body) and prepared for the worst.

Only to find what he thought would be a corpse twiddling his thumbs, head bowed in thought. The owner of the bare feet was actually around the teenager's own age, perhaps a year or two older. It was hard to tell under yellow tinted halogens, but the boy's hair was certainly beyond merely blonde, looking more like a grubby white. When Hiccup had exhaled, the stranger decided to raise his face, revealing possibly the most delicately featured boy that he'd ever seen.

Despite his hair, the brows were dark, peppered here and there with grey hairs. His skin was almost translucently pale, pulled tightly over a pair of sharp cheekbones and a strong jaw. Wind chilled lips parted slightly, revealing a set of straight pearly teeth, which glinted when he smiled widely upon meeting Hiccup's gaze with a pair of unmistakably blue, heavily lashed eyes.

All of this was at odds with his woefully dishevelled appearance, the worn out pants looking like they'd fall apart at any second when the slim young man stood, placing his hands inside the front pocket of a silver threaded hoodie.

The puzzled teenager stared at the frayed cuffs disappearing inside the fabric, thinking it strange that such a ratty garment could still harbour such beautiful details in its intricate embroidery.

"Um. Hi." The taller boy started. The shorter gulped.

"Uh, hey," He replied, mouth inconveniently dry, back perspiring. "Can I ask? What you're doing on my porch?" Hiccup had tried not to sound petulant, but it wasn't really a question you could pose to someone without doing so. Those tired looking eyes suddenly grew saucer like, surprised.

"Wait. So you can?" A conflicted little brow knit flitted across that handsome face, wrought with a peculiar mix of delight and anxiety.

"What- So it wasn't? Yes!"

The door was still obstructed. Suddenly, a pair of darkly veined hands grasped the boy's biceps, vice like and frankly unnerving. That skinny little body tensed up like a metal spring, petrified.

"Hey, let go-!"

"You can actually - I can touch you?"

"You may not!" The panicking teenager almost shrieked, shaking himself loose and stepping back rapidly on to the side walk, terrified. The deceptively gentle face dropped like a bomb, absolutely crestfallen. He held out his recently vacated hands beseechingly, but Hiccup was having none of it, stepping yet further back to the curb.

"I don't know who you are, or why you're here, but I want you to please leave." He quavered, drawing shaky breathes to try and gain confidence. The stranger stepped closer, hands withdrawn, but eyes dark.

"You don't understand," He lamented quietly, voice like the crunch of autumn leaves. "I have waited so long! Just to talk to you." Another two steps. Hiccup stumbled off the curb.

"Please, I don't want trouble." The teen balled his fists, Raising them up and into his chest, unsure of what to do if this even got violent. This kid was obviously a homeless lunatic, but what did he want with Hiccup? As far as he knew, they'd never met. He took another step back, but the shrill blare of an oncoming Merc grabbed his attention from the possible threat to his safety to a definite one, literally frozen in the headlights.

"Hiccup!"

Terror lighting his features, Jack sprang and barrelled the boy out of the way with an athletic dive. The driver of the Mercedes only saw a kid looking like he'd been hit with an invisible wrecking ball.

Being a Merc driver, he didn't bother to slow down and instead carried on while the tangle of limbs that was Hiccup attempted to free himself from the protective embrace of the maniac who had both saved and endangered his life.

"What the hell is wrong with you?" Spat the scrabbling teenager, thrashing this way and that under the contorted frame of the taller youth. Icy hands clamped themselves over the startled boy's messy crown, but he wrenched them free and scrambled to his feet, panting.

The stranger rocked back on to his haunches, genuinely puzzled at the lack of gratitude.

"But I justâ€œ! Hiccup, please." He croaked, straightening up, pulling down the ratty hoodie that had ridden up to his waist, exposing an aged brass belt buckle cinched low on the hips and a lean, bare midriff briefly before blue fabric concealed it once more. Hiccup shook his head fearfully, gearing up to dart to the sides if need be. However, given the other's physical dexterity and wiry musculature, he didn't fancy himself emerging victorious in a sprinting match.

Instead, the teenager raised a scuffed palm, keeping at least an arm of distance between him the straggly looking stranger at all times. Glancing down the road for traffic, he side stepped him quickly, never taking his eyes away for more than half a second.

"How do you know my name?" The boy queried cautiously, grape vining on to the curb and backwards up the steps, spare hand desperately patting a thick denim pocket for the clink of his key fob. The invisible forcefield that the raised hand had temporarily created seemed to crumble, and in a moment the white haired vagrant was close once more, stalking up the porch until barely a foot remained between them. His deceptively young face seemed sallow in the artificial light, eyes sunk deeply in their sockets, cheeks hollow, skin paper like and thin. Up close, it was possible to just faintly see the network of dry blood vessels that ran beneath the surface of his hooded eye lidsâ€œ! Dormant.

Hiccup felt his own blood run cold when a hand of cadaverous temperature pincerred his bony wrist, and it took every inch of him not to scream like a girl. He bit back a moan of terror and met the gaze of the beautiful predator that eyed him back almostâ€œ! Wistfully.

"You dreamt about me, the other night." He informed the boy against the door, squeezing to make an unconscious point. The wrist in his grip purpled, drawing a whine from its owner.

"You're hurting me, Jack!" He cried, then stopped, surprised at himself. The fingers didn't budge, but luminous blue eyes glinted in the dusky light, fascinated.

"Say that again."

"Wait. That's actually your name? 'Jack'?" Echoed the boy, confusion drawing his brows together. The joy in the taller boy's pallid face was almost akin to ecstasy, emotion wetly limning his dark lids, revelling in the sound of his own name being relayed back in someone else's voice. He sighed contentedly, leaning down and hovering just a palm length from Hiccup's face, barely containing the chuckles that brewed rapidly in his throat.

"See? _See_? You remember the dream: You were finally dreaming about me, after all this time! I finally got throughâ€œ!" He interlaced his fingers with Hiccup's stunned ones and pressed his forehead against the warm, rosy knuckles, lashes collecting drops of moisture as he squeezed his eyes shut.

"We can finally be friends."

The small fist in his grasp bucked sharply and caught Jack in the nose, sending him reeling in surprise. In the next moment, the lonely boy registered the jangle of keys, the click of a latch and the decidedly final sounding slam of an oaken door. The knocker rattled, matching the pace of Jack's rapid blinks as he heard frantic feet belting upstairs on the other side.

Aware of the proper etiquette for these things, even after all this time, the purple veined hand grasped the brass knocker, rapping thrice. The feet continued to ascend until they faded from audible range.

"Hiccup," He called sternly, like a parent reprimanding a child. "Open this door. I know you can hear me, and I also know that you want answers!" He was loud and crisp to only one set of ears, owned by a terrified boy that now hung out of his bedroom window. He was a fair way up, and no drain pipes ran by him, so there was no way he couldâ€¦ No way.

'Jack' glanced up at the white painted window, knowing the teenager's presence without any announcement. Hiccup paled, but took a breath.

"OK, you might be a little familiar to me, but I could have seen you walking down the street! It happens all the time, and it's a fact that you can't dream about people you've never met." The sickly looking boy shoved his hands once more into the front of his worn hoodie, shifting awkwardly and nervously licked his lip. "So start talking: How do I know you, and why are you following me? You have one minute before I call the police."

Downcast cerulean eyes flicked up then, unperturbed. "That wouldn't work." The owner stated flatly, dropping his hands back down to his sides. Hiccup blinked.

"What do you mean? I can tell you're fast, but the cops are only-"

"They couldn't catch me if I wanted them too." Informed Jack coldly, words ringing with a sureness that made the teenager above uneasy.

"I know you, Hiccup Haddock. You're fifteen, sixteen next February. You attend Bork Boldson High, don't like dodge ball, and have an enthusiasm for BBC documentaries with David Attenborough.

"You live with your Dad who's never home, and you," he jabbed a finger to punctuate his point "Are a very lonely kid." The ragged boy lowered his arm, expectantly staring up. A bark of incredulous laughter broke the still moment and Hiccup slowly shook his head, a cold sweat clinging to his back.

"You've been spying on me? OK, that's it. You're crazy and I'm calling the brass." The teenager started to turn from the window, when a gust of wind blew his hair into his eyes but he caught a glimpse of the apparent stalker scurrying horizontally up the wall and springing panther-like on to his window ledge.

Skinny legs gave out and Hiccup collapsed against his bed, heart

hammering in his chest. What he'd seen just now was akin to the kind of supernatural powers exhibited in vampire movies, and did this Jack person ever look the part:

Rim lit by moon, the transparent skin took on a blueish tint, snowy hair blazing like a platinum halo and silver threads glinting ominously in the harsh light. He was absolutely inanimate, not even the even rhythm of breath to break the unnatural stillness, indicating that he didn't need air at all. Those luminous blue eyes shone wetly within his tired sockets, unblinking and almost ravenously taking in the sight before him.

* * *

><p>So it continues... And it doesn't look good.
:'D_

**As ever, thanks for reading and reviews, feedback, and questions are awesome!**

**Q.G. Xx**

3. Chapter 3

**_Finally! Stalker!

Jack continues. :'D Sorry for the delay but I flip-flopped on so many things in this chapter. Enjoy... (?) _**

* * *

><p>The drapes still swayed gently in lieu of the dying heady that stirred them, but that was all the activity that stirred the room's atmosphere presently, so thick with tension that one could cut it with a knife.<p>

Head swimming, Hiccup struggled to stay upright as he tried to comprehend the situation before him, breath quickening and heart slamming so hard it threatened to crack his ribs. This was bad.

He collapsed back onto his elbows, feeling trapped and really quite helpless at this moment in time. From what he could tell, a creepy blood sucker type person had been following him for an undetermined amount of time and could freely come in and out of his home, unseen, probably watched him sleep, biding his time... Hungering for virgin blood.

A cold knot bunched in his stomach as his ears burned at the thought, raising slight shoulders to try and hide his neck away. His movements were slow, measured, so as not to incur any premature movement from his uninvited guest. The wind had finally died down, and the air was deadly still as the pair were poised in utter silence, until the scared teenager swallowed, un-sticking his dry throat and speaking at last.

"Just so you know, you're not getting my blood, you can count that right out." Hiccup squeaked, ashamed at the meekness of his voice. The boy on his sill moved then, slightly, cocking his head to the side.

"I'm sorry? Blood? What are you talking about?" His deep voice was

wrought with confusion, pouting a little while he thought. The expression informed Hiccup that this being probably wasn't after his neck, but he certainly wasn't human. Propping on to his elbows, he cautiously tried again, hoping his voice wouldn't betray him so horribly this time.

"Well, if you aren't after that, then why are you here, on my window ledge?" He couldn't help but grimace, just as confused as the creature opposite. "Why have you been spying on me?"

Hands with blackened nails wrapped protectively around a ragged waist then, as the pale looking teenager huddled self consciously, fighting to maintain eye contact.

"I wasn't spying exactly... I was guarding you."

Another painful throb in his chest. "'Guarding me'. From what, exactly?"

The question made Jack pause again, eyes searching Hiccup's numerous book shelves across the room, as if they held some kind of answer in their well creased spines. "I was guarding you..."

Despite himself, Hiccup leant forward, curious to the stranger's probably inadequate answer.

However... a part of him really wanted to know.

He repeated himself, slowly, surely, nerves melting away into a thirst for answers that had gotten him into more than a few scrapes.

"Guarding me from What, 'Jack' _?"

A nervous lip bite, stripping away the monster for a moment, revealing the vulnerabilities of a apprehensive teen beneath. Hiccup's heart slowed a fraction, mouth dropping open slightly of its own accord.

"From... solitude."

A beat from the human's pounding heart,

"To be honest, I was being a little selfish with that." Exhausted blue eyes searched bland carpet for a moment, before locking back to the green ones he'd come to know so well.

"Selfish how?"

"Selfish because... I'm alone too. Have been for a very, very long time." He choked out a cold, bitter laugh. The truth always tasted bad in his mouth, but revealing it to someone somehow alleviated the awful flavour, making it bearable for a moment. Even though that freckled face was mostly frightened, the posture loosened slightly and the saucer-like eyes that regarded him flattened into almost _sympathetic ovals.

"How long is 'a long time'?"

Catching Hiccup's eye once more, Jack planted his palms on the sill,

lifting his body and withdrawing his legs from beneath, swinging briefly before straightening them so his feet lightly brushed the carpet.

"Er..." A blend of self consciousness and mild fear thinned the young man's mouth, as if he were afraid to admit his true age, so he sucked his teeth momentarily, eyes raising as he searched for answers within the recesses of his brain. "Longer," He announced finally, low voice slowing his cognition. "Than you have been alive." Eyes flicked over the youthful body before him, affirming his estimate. "At least."

A flash of activity, and Hiccup stood: His scientific, rational mind overpowered any fear for a moment as he gestured wildly to Jack's apparently deceptive teenage form.

"What the- Dude, OK: You say you're not a vampire, but you look like this? What gives?" Small, beseeching hands spread palms up towards the still boy, a grey flecked brow rising. "Are you a ghost of something? Is that what this is, I'm being haunted?"

That struck a nerve. Emotion hijacking the bedraggled Spirit's actions, he pushed himself off the sill and forced Hiccup back towards his bed, the teenager's back flush against his sheets. Jack crouched, hung his face inches from the other. He panted cold clouds thickly, and the freckled youth shivered despite himself.

"I am not a ghost," Jack near growled, predatory poise held tensely as he spoke. "I am here, just differently. You see me." Blood clotted fingertips brushed back an auburn bang from a lightly perspiring forehead. "You feel me." He purred, voice a low, guttural rumble.

Hiccup's eyes fluttered shut, breath catching in his throat as he tried to rationalise the situation. This was all a dream, he told himself, just a trippy little nightmare born of stress and bad tuna casserole: There wasn't an insane ghostly vagrant straddling him on all fours. He wasn't alone in an empty house, completely powerless to fight the fear that paralysed his arms, legs and tongue.

Another cool breath bathed his slim, freckled neck, raising the hairs upon it like a regiment of soldiers standing to attention.

The ice was actually settling upon Hiccup's warm skin, melting quickly and trickling down his clavicle into the hollow of his chest. He bit back a tiny moan when the cold droplet settled upon his shivering stomach.

The red from Jack's vision had cleared by then, and his throat tightened when he witnessed the droplets disappearing down the collar of his charge's loose shirt. He battled valiantly and won the urge not to follow its progress, instead diverting his attention to the tight, scared face below his, hair tousled against the soft duvet.

Withdrawing icy hands and halting the Arctic breaths that loosed themselves instinctively from frigid lungs, the spectre waited for a green eye to crack open, so they could start again. Sure enough, after a respite from the chill, Hiccup braved raising his eye lids, met once more with startlingly still blue.

"F-Fine... You're not a ghost either. Your solidness kind of discounts that theory." The boy croaked, body still stiff with a quiet, ever present terror that manifested itself as immovable weights within his bony limbs. "So what does it leave? A mutant? A super human?"

A small, unreadable lip curl.

"A Guardian."

Hiccup blinked, still perturbed by the closeness of the other boy that hung over head, like a spider swinging idly above the unfortunate fly that had entangled itself in deadly gossamer... But he wasn't sure if Jack was even aware of what he was doing.

The words that he spoke lightened his features, a flash of hope buried within a mischievous tone, as if he held the title close to his heart, but it brought out something else, like a tendril of his true nature stretched out and arrested that gaunt face: A face that was deceptively young... And undeniably good looking.

The boy finally gained some control over his arms, and tentatively pushed against the rag clad chest, noticing that what he once thought to be silver threads were actually thin veins of ice. Strangely, given the demonstrated abilities of the owner, it made much more sense in the scheme of things. Foggy memories of his dream started to rise to the surface of Hiccup's psyche like oil in water, piecing together fragments from his childhood bedtimes and books.

Jack...

Ice. Wind. Immortality. Freezing cold...Frost.

It was adding up.

Not a crinkly, ill tempered old man. Not an elf with mischievous intent, hopping gleefully from one foot to the other and wringing his tiny hands in glee. Not even a creepy snow man surrounded by children that was way too jolly for his compromising situation...

No. Jack Frost was a deranged young man, devastatingly handsome and dangerously close to Hiccup at this moment, each muscle tensed with a spring loaded readiness: The kind of power that the fearful boy imagined could allow the obsessive being the capabilities to tear his weak, mortal form limb from limb like tissue paper if he so chose.

Hiccup swallowed. Jack watched, still staring curiously at his freckled neck.

"You're... Him." Announced the boy shakily, slowly sitting up, with Jack (much to his relief) scuttling off backwards, bouncing gracefully on to his haunches when he landed on the carpet with a whisper. His moist eyes were rapt, unblinking as before. It was unsettling to put it gently, but at the very least the teenager had backed off of him now.

Jack's snowy head cocked, ready to ask who exactly Hiccup thought he was... Until a rattle and slam downstairs snapped both of their attentions to Hiccup's jacket laden door. A single heart thudded as

the hooded figure remained stock still.

"Hiccup? Son? Are you home?" Called Stoick in his usual booming voice, drifting up to the landing.

A bead of sweat traversed the living boy's cheek, taking a deep breath before yelling back. Jack didn't move.

"Yeah, I'm here, be down in a second!" He whipped his head around sharply to gauge his uninvited guest's reaction to his intentions, but was only met with a quiet intensity, not hostile, but not particularly impressed either. Would Jack let him leave, just like that?

Lingering a second longer, frantic feet swung themselves hastily over the bed covers and nervous hands wrenched at the brass knob, turning and opening the door so hard that it banged against the wall. Hiccup swung around the banister, laughing with relief when he spotted his father laying down his briefcase, coat already neatly hung on the labelled peg. It was almost enough to make his green eyes spill over with happiness.

"Dad!"

As if there were wings on his feet, Hiccup flew down the staircase, toe for once avoiding the skirting board and leapt into his Father's surprised but never the less grateful arms, glad to receive his slight son's affection. He squeezed and lifted Hiccup slightly with his beefy arms, feeling skinny ones (almost) encircle his chest tightly, that messy little auburn mop pressed firmly against where his heart was. Stoick loosened his hold, but his son remained clinging to him like a barnacle on a salty rock.

"OK, son..." He muttered kindly, gently prising the vice of the boy's hug off him as delicately as he could until he was free. He held on to the wrists carefully, staring down at the bony fists, then into faintly shining green eyes. "What's the matter?"

Drawn away from the familiar tinge of pipe smoke and his father's powerful frame, Hiccup shrugged minutely at the question, answering as honestly as he could.

"I'm... Just really glad you're home." He confessed, lips tightening a fraction as he fought to contain the rest of the story. The rest of the story, it seemed, hadn't followed immediately, but had silently sauntered down the stairs behind him, and a tiny prickle behind his ears informed him of the youth's presence. A bare, twitching foot invaded Hiccup's vision, and he turned to see Jack languidly reclining along the banister, perfectly balanced and utterly at ease. That blue stare moved to Stoick.

"That your Dad?" He crooned, knowing the answer.

Hiccup's blood ran cold.

A lazy leg swung off the bannister's left side, toing and froing to no particular rhythm. The shift of a thumb reminded the boy to his Father's presence, pale eyes scanning his freckled face.

"Something's up. So come on: Out with it."

"N-Nothing!" Stammered Hiccup uselessly, trying to ignore the graceful dismount that Jack had performed from the mahogany rail, casually slinking up beside him and leaning against the ornate newel, pale face exhibiting apparent interest.

"I'm, er, just nervous, you know? Big test on Thursday." The boy tried, briefly flicking his gaze between the smug ghost and his oblivious father.

So Dad has no idea he's standing right there. Just perfect.

A hearty laugh from Stoick caused the grip on his wrists to slacken, and Hiccup was free at last, only for a ham-like hand to clap against his shoulder roughly.

"Ha ha, Oh son. You get so anxious over the tiniest things. You'll be _fine_... You haven't failed a test in, well, ever!"

Trying to share his humour (and mask his horror) the boy attempted to smile, before he remembered their conversation this morning.

"Wait, Dad, didn't you say you'd be late this morning?" He queried, only for Stoick to stiffen in response. The man nodded slowly, and started towards the stairs.

"Ah, yes, about that... I have to pick up a few things, then I'll be off again." He jabbed a thick thumb towards the door. "We have a huge project on at the moment that I need to commute for, so they loaned me a car."

His tone was obviously excited, and Hiccup tried to seem enthusiastic. "That's great, Dad... Guess I'll see you tomorrow, then?"

Approving of his son's reaction, the huge man nodded appreciatively and started upstairs. His hand reached for the banister, and, much to Hiccup's terror, _through_ Jack. Trails of luminescent vapour trailed from the dinner-plate palm's progress, and the ghost shuddered for a moment, curling into himself slightly. Realizing his display of weakness, the teenager straightened and snapped his gaze to his host, who stood there, aghast. They remained that way for a good twenty seconds, quietly regarding each other as Jack longed to answer the questions burning in those green, curious eyes.

The tell tale thud of heavy steps alerted the boys to Stoick's descent, and Jack wisely stepped out of the way this time. "OK, I have what I need, so I'll be going—" The man started, only to stop and rub his own arms briskly. "It's a little chilly in here today," He commented. "Don't forget to close any windows before bed."

"Got it..."

Pulling the tent-sized jacket over his massive shoulder, the burly man picked up his briefcase and faced the door, but turned at the last second, regarding his son with genuine concern.

"Are you going to be fine on your own?"

A weak nod was his answer, but unsettled as his son seemed, it was probably just anxiety for his test. He stretched his bristly face into a warm smile and stooped over the slender boy, wrapping an arm around him once more, feeling the embrace being returned.

"Love you, son," He announced gruffly, stepping back and heading out of the door. The boy followed, waiting at the door frame.

"Y-You too!" He called as the little yellow car door was unlocked.
"Stay safe!"

"And you!" Yelled Stoick out of the un-wound window, before waving and starting up the engine, pulling out of the driveway and speeding down the street and out of sight.

Hanging uselessly in the doorway, Hiccup helplessly watched his Dad travel beyond his reach and became acutely aware to the teenager standing behind him. He took a breath and calmly shut the door, pivoted on a heel and faced his 'guest'.

Those startling blue eyes creased in sadness, shining just a tad too wetly than Hiccup would have liked given the fact he wanted to be furious with him, (due to the currently constant fear for his life).

"He loves you, doesn't he?"

A heavy silence.

"Yes, he does..." And I love him, thought Hiccup solemnly, and if you do just one thing to hurt him I swear to God -

"Must be nice. I'm glad for you." Murmured Jack almost fondly, a warm smile gracing his cold features. His hands wrung, as if recalling an action or aching for a familiar object, but it soon stopped, and the hands retreated into the large front pocket of his worn hoodie.

Bare, blackened toes kneaded the carpet as silence fell between them once more. Pursing his lips, the freckled youth folded his arms and transferred his weight to the right leg. The stare down continued as he spoke.

"People really don't know you're here, do they?"

The break in their stare was all the answer he needed, and a disturbance within the pocket signalled the restless wringing of hands once more. Hiccup rested his own eyes, glancing up at the muted family portrait that hung from the wall. A tiny five year old unruly hair held between a gigantic father and a kindly mother, smiles genuinely bemused at the antics of their child.

"No friends, no family... You're really all alone?"

"You get used to it." Sighed Jack, seeming so absolutely defeated by life that an odd pang pulsed in Hiccup's chest for a moment before reason took the reigns again.

"I don't understand you, but I want you to understand this, Jack," His tone was hard, non-threatening, but certainly with a

promising air behind the words. "Because if you ever involve anyone other than me in this situation-"

"You'd, what, kill me?" Laughed the taller youth, though not maliciously. "Don't worry, Hic. I've no interest in that kind of thing: You're safe with me." He finished, flashing that spectacular set of teeth blithely.

He actually thought this was funny_._

For now, Jack seemed... Stable, maybe enough to get a respite from Hiccup to think things over.

Clumsy feet did their level best to stay coordinated on the plush surface, and Hiccup carefully rounded Jack, side stepping him and climbing the stairs. Panic had exhausted him, bunched his meagre muscles almost painfully and he needed to unwind.

Jack traipsed silently up to the foot of the stairs and draped himself over the newel, cheek rested on his laced fingers as he observed his host's ascent.

"I'm... Taking a shower, OK?" The living boy explained, raising a submissive palm. "Because I, like, really need one."

But mostly because he needed to think.

The tiniest twinkle of a smile was all the response he received, along with the lowering of dark, hooded eyelids.

* * *

><p>As always, thanks for reading! Reviews, feed back and questions are always appreciated! _

**Q.G. Xx**

4. Chapter 4

AN: Sorry about the comparatively short length. Also, please let me know if there is any mistakes.

Enjoyâ€| ?

* * *

><p>Slamming the door had never been so satisfying as it was right now, as Hiccup scurried through the portal and pressed his back against it, catching held breaths and savouring the solitude he now had.<p>

He was disproportionately exhausted. Quavering fingers checked the lock on the bathroom a third time before even beginning to tend to the accursedly tiny buttons on a green plaid shirt. However, the practised action was instinctual by now, and without too much trouble Hiccup shed the light garment before unbuckling his aged brown belt and robust jeans, almost pushing them off before smacking himself in the forehead for not removing his shoes.

The literally chilling memory of the water droplet against his abdomen reminded the trembling boy that he had neglected to take the hiking boots off because he ran into his home fearing for dear, sweet life. Crouching down, Hiccup thought about the events that hadn't even transpired an hour ago, about the ghoulish teen that awaited him downstairs and why he'd triple knotted this lace for Christ's sake.

A minute later, the shirt and jeans were carefully draped over a spare towel rack, and socks lay neatly paired inside a single boot. The rattle of the shower curtain echoed in the cleanly tiled bathroom, but the hiss of water flooding into the porcelain tub drowned out the disconcerting sound and a bare foot gingerly tested the temperature.

Finding it fine, Hiccup sighed and stepped under a soothing torrent of mercifully hot water, allowing the beautiful spray to soak his auburn hair almost black, the tension sloughing away from his aching frame like the sweat and grime he'd accumulated throughout the day, spinning down the plug hole, never to be heard from again. He stood there for a few minutes, jets pounding at his neck and shoulders as he rested his forehead against the wall, eyes closed, breathing deep the cleansing steam that fogged the room's mirrors and windows.

Pressure and heat from the water made his freckled skin rosy, and the boy finally decided to lather his hair with a minty shampoo, massaging the soap into his scalp for a little longer than usual, tempted by a repeat when it didn't feel quite clean enough. But Hiccup thought better of it and rinsed out the suds before reaching for his favourite apple scented conditioner, squeezing a creamy green blob into his palm and rubbing them together, drawing his slippery hands through his matted hair, de-tangling the mass almost eyes fluttered shut for an instant, merely to appreciate the scent and the instant gratification of smooth hair tangled in his fingers.

"You always forget to wash behind your ears, you know?"

A sharp gasp made those previously serene eyes fly open in alarm, hands flailing as a spinning heel lost its traction on the slick surface beneath and slipped, causing Hiccup a fall back into the tub unceremoniously, tugging at the curtain before smacking his head against the bottom. A drawn out groan became a series of sputtering chokes as droplets from the shower entered the boy's wind pipe, and his dearest wish at that moment was to sink deep into the porcelain and never come out, dreading the voice that had joined him unbidden in his time of reprieve.

However, this option seemed rather slim, so Hiccup coiled up and sat rubbing his head, disoriented and mildly mortified.

Mortification progressed to extreme terror when the blue tinted stars began to clear from the hunched teenager's vision however, and the awareness of his bare skin threatened to make his heart burst with fright then and there. With the curtain finally drawn back, a familiar hooded head popped around it, flashing that immaculate smile and perching on the lip of the tub, feet stretched just within reach of the shower's continuous stream, steaming profusely as very warm met intensely cold. Jack didn't seem to mind: rather, he stretched his willowy legs out further into the water's path wriggling his

grubby toes and saturating the frayed hems of his oddly laced trousers.

"It's a crying shame." Chuckled the relaxed teen, briefly regarding his clean feet before focusing his attention on the naked, petrified boy huddled not a foot away from him. The stillness wouldn't last.

"Get the hell out of here!" Hiccup screamed shrilly, pointing viciously to the door with one arm while pulling knobbly knees to his chest protectively with the other. The intruder turned his head left and right, searching, leaning back and forward looking for something among the shelves of the bathroom from where he sat. Finally, he settled back on Hiccup, who was only partially shaking from the recent coldness against his damp skin.

"I don't see any rubber duckies in here to keep you company, Hic," Crooned Jack, rolling his eyes up to focus on one of the spot lights. "And as much of a conversationalist as Toothless is—"

"Please," Whined the frankly pitiful boy, annoyed that his voice betrayed him so completely, but he was too uncomfortable to care. "Just leave." He wouldn't cry. He couldn't. It would give Jack all the power, not that he hadn't wrangled most of that away when he broke into the locked bathroom with no apparent effort, but still.

"Hiccupâ€œ!" Soft, enticing. But entirely unwelcome.

Embarrassment formed a hot, hard lump in Hiccup's throat as he fought back the telling red sting that limned his eyes, forcing his twig-like thighs together as closely as they would go.

"Don't look at me!" Came the horse little cry.

Tense little fingers dug into his bony shoulders, self consciously attempting to conceal a under-developed chest, and the crimson face retreated into the hollow created by the fence of withdrawn legs. The clothed teen stood then, barely acknowledging the immediate soaking his derelict garments endured. Instead, he crouched in front of the youth, sucking in his cheeks sharply and grimacing.

"It's a bit late for that, Kiddo, I already saw everything." he pointed out bluntly, scanning the bare, moist skin for a moment before settling on the damp auburn crown. A small flicker of amusement brightened his eyes. The distraught figure remained static.

"Don't care. Go." Came the flat reply, obviously deadpan as a tactic to disguise the distress in his voice. A curious head cocked, blue hood falling thickly against the upturned cheek.

"I've already seen you, so what are you ashamed of?"

Cheeks stained with embarrassment, Hiccup raised his dripping face incredulously, every inch of his expression screaming 'Are you fucking kidding me?', but apparently his guest decided he couldn't read between the lines very well and sighed heavily, brusquely grabbing his host by thin, slick biceps, slowly (but forcefully) dragging him to his feet. The poor boy thought about trying to

struggle, but the dark nailed fingers were iron clamps upon his tender flesh, seemingly unaware of their mildly bruising strength. One arm was relieved however, when Jack pulled back his sopping hood. Silver hair was immediately soaked by the high pressure spray, steam rising off his bare neck and even his scalp, making the ghostly figure seem strangely ethereal.

He breathed heavily under the hot water, almost as if relieved. The loose hand dragged itself through saturated silver strands, pulling them back off the teenager's slowly colouring forehead. Hiccup tried to reclaim some modesty with his free hand, watching droplets bounce skittishly in droves off Jack's apparently warming skin, long lashed lids heavy with moisture and sliding shut for a moment as he rubbed them, as if he hadn't bathed in a long while. Given Jack's appearance however, it seemed entirely plausible and even probable.

Mildly bucked teeth compulsively chewed pink lips timidly as Hiccup observed the water logged hoodie's intricate design work vanish, worn blue fabric clinging to the wide, defined chest beneath.

"See, you have aâ€| Unique body, Hiccup," began Jack, sluicing the water from his eyes, locking them with the nude boy's mildly squinting green ones, noting the inflamed veins around the rim. He followed the rivulets winding frantically across ruddy, freckled cheeks, entwining and racing down an equally blazing neck, resting briefly and pooling at the prominent clavicle. "It has its quirks, drawbacks and the likeâ€|"

Smoothly, still frigid fingers skimmed Hiccup's collar bone tenderly, brushing off the collection of water that had gathered in its sizeable dip and stroked the base of the shuddering boy's throat, fighting to remain stoic in the presence of his distressed, reactive lip bites.

"But it's undeniablyâ€|"

A pale index finger slid over Hiccup's thrumming heart while Jack searched his rusty vocabulary thoughtfully.

The rest of the palm followed suit, splayed across the melanin mottled breast bone listlessly. It twitched beneath the contact.

"Lovely."

Wide, watering eyes tried to stare past the sodden blue arm and the prying hand attached to it, instead setting their dazed sight on the rapidly running water scurrying around his toes, honestly unsure about how to react. There was another boy in his shower, uninvited and touching him and Hiccup was naked and he couldn't take this and did Jack just call him
_lovely-_that isn't even important now-

But.

"â€|How," A tight throated croak escaped quivering lips, mossy eyes narrowing as he squinted through the water in confusion. "How can someone likeâ€| You can't-?"

"I like your freckles _especially_."

Before Hiccup could say anything further, Jack began to study the youth's mottled trapezius, eyes flicking about as he casually commentated, reading the body as if it were like the lines in the boy's twitching palm. The unnaturally perky silver spikes had fallen to the hot spray, 'melting' completely against Jack's scalp, Hiccup noticed dizzily, feeling like flat hair suited the Spirit too, making him seem more deceptively human.

"I see Hercules and Orion... Just in your shoulders." Eyes kept descending, and the scrutinised party was becoming more unnerved by the second, sobering rapidly. Regardless of Jack's claims that he'd 'Seen it all', it didn't give him the right to see the boy's body whenever he Damn well pleased.

Snapping out of his petrified state, a viper-like hand darted behind, grabbed a fluffy towel from the nearby rack and Hiccup wrapped the cloth around his waist tightly, stumbling to the edge of the tub and out of the stream. He turned his back turned on the other teenager as he shook with an unnameable anxiety. Heart beating so hard it hurt, the boy berated himself for not thinking to cover up sooner, regardless of how frightened he'd been. What had he been thinking, letting Jack do that to him, pawing him and looking-? Urgh.

He'd been humiliated, felt almost violated, and no one claiming to like somebody as Jack claimed he did Hiccup would ever make them feel this way.

"For the last time: Leave!" Came the sharp, echoing voice, hitting slick white walls and projecting the message back into the sprite's ears. The gurgling plug hole and the hiss of water hung in the air as Jack considered the request with a thin, flat mouth. Hiccup wasn't finding this entertaining or exciting, and obviously couldn't take a compliment, even after all the time he'd spent learning about what his friend really liked.

What an odd kid, the tall teenager thought, making to move out of the tubâ€¦ Until he spotted one more thing, coming with the notion that he was privy to something possibly no one else had seen.

Hiccup felt Jack on him before he could even turn around, and shock paralysed him to the spot as an icy finger traced poignantly between his shoulder blades and over the prominent bumps of vertebrae.

"I also see Virgo." Came the whisper in his ear, cool breath fanning over the pink shell.

The boy couldn't contain a strangled whimper and bit his lip over it, staring at the rim of the tub and wishing he was anywhere but right here. Tiny, cool and achingly familiar droplets landed upon shower heated flesh, almost stinging with their coldness. It was too much to bear as the finger connected the 'points' keenly with precise little strokes. A dark laugh rumbled in the elder boy's throat when Hiccup almost cried out, clamping a free hand over the startled mouth.

"Just thought I'd let you know, since it's in a spot people rarely see on themselves."

Smirk firmly in place, Jack allowed his fingers to drag as they left

they left the distraught boy's freckled hide and oddly enjoyed the sight of him jerk with chills. There was a distinct lack of rustling and an absent series of rattles as the sopping shower curtain parted, but wet feet slapped encouragingly against the hard floor until a comforting door slam let Hiccup know he was alone once more.

The towel slipping from his grasp, he buckled and curled in on himself, hugging his arms and knees as tightly as he could. The glacial tingle still ran down Hiccup's curved spine, but as hard as he tried it was impossible to stop the hammering of his heart within his chest. Sure, fright was the main reason for its erratic thumping, but there was something else.

Resting his lips against door knob knee caps, the teenager sighed heavily, unable to quell the rush of scarlet he knew had flooded to his surface. He couldn't help but think of Jack, of how much he actually knew about the boy he followed so possessively, stomach turning at the thought that his little charade had been alluding to something that was intensely private. He couldn't know that, no one did. Could he?

A surge of heat stained Hiccup's already red face an even deeper shade of scarlet, shaking his damp head, trying to banish the ludicrous(?) thoughts from his already frazzled mind. This was all too much to comprehend at once, and he really needed to finish up in here while he had a moment of peace.

Unwrapping himself unsteadily, a sponge was thickly lathered up with gel and it scrubbed brusquely against delicate skin until the shamed teenager's limbs and neck glowed with a tight, pink rawness.

And lastly, he pondered uneasily when the taps squeaked shut, was this was even the first time that the ghostly youth had seen him undressed. From how his unwanted guest had so casually treated the entire scenario, a heavy lump of dread sitting in the pit of Hiccup's stomach inwardly cemented the idea that it wasn't.

It would be a correct hypothesis.

* * *

><p>Unconventional shower scene.. I don't even know any more. But as ever, thank you for reading. Feedback and comments are greatly appreciated and I will update as soon as I can._

**Q.G. Xx**

5. Chapter 5

In order to avoid any further damage to his tattered modesty, Hiccup had dried off and re-dressed in his clothes temporarily. The situation wasn't ideal, but anything seemed like a better alternative to arriving half dressed in a room with a spirit that had no sense of personal space. Hiccup was determined to give the senseless ghost a piece of his mind-As soon as he'd blow dried his hair off roughly. There was simply too much of the stuff to towel or drip dry, and the boy's father had always harboured a great fondness for his son's hair, as he'd taken after his mother, Stoick's late wife. When the

teenager had started growing the thick auburn crop out, it hadn't bothered the burly man in the slightest, so it continued unhindered until reached the nape of his skinny neck.

Clicking off the black contraption (and listening to the silence for a few blissful beats), the damp towel was folded back over some hot chrome rungs on a heated towel rack and after a deep breath, Hiccup unbolted the useless door, out into the dark landing. Carpet that would normally be comfortable beneath bare feet only seemed to set the teenager's teeth on edge, fibers prickling his over sensitive toes. He dropped the boots in his hand and slipped them back on loosely, creeping back towards his room, noticing that the door to the dark space was ajar.

It was impossible to fight the urge to swallow, knowing that he would find his 'guest' on the other side, doing who knows what. Possibly he was poised atop the bookcase, ready to strike-

Stop it, Hiccup, Snapped the said boy's consciousness at the rest of a racing mind. You're being completely irrational: if he wanted to kill you, he would have by now. I think Jack honestly meant it when he said he wouldn't hurt you. Just sack up, Damn it!

Wide eyes blinking a few times, Hiccup took another deep breath and grasped the shiny brass door knob. It became apparent that Jack could most probably see in the dark, because the room was near pitch black when the teenager entered. The clouds were thickly obfuscating the moon for the moment, so only the low glow of street lamps provided any sort of illumination to unadjusted eyes squinting through the blackness that still managed to identify the outline of a lanky body perched on the wide windowsill. Sash frame pushed open in its entirety, a brisk breeze funnelled through the portal, past the boy who presumably swung his feet over the ledge. Jack still hadn't acknowledged his host's approach, and as Hiccup's vision grew accustomed to the lack of light, he started to pick out details.

Such as the fact that the ghoulish youth wasn't wearing his hoodie.

It could be spotted (and heard) dripping over the corner of Hiccup's wardrobe, probably ruining the rug beneath. The silhouette -stripped of its bulky garment- was more broadly shouldered than the other, and slim in the waist. When the moon decided to peek out from behind his hazy shroud, Jack was bathed in silver and Hiccup's jaw dropped.

This couldn't have been the same terrifying being from earlier that evening. His skin practically glowed with its paleness under stark white light, the translucence revealing the faintest veins as Hiccup approached, partially-involuntarily- entranced. He couldn't help himself, quiet feet automatically closing the gap between the pair before he could even comprehend that he'd moved. The hairlines of faded scars ran adjacent to each other across the otherwise smooth skin, reminiscent perhaps of wide set claw marks, or even the occasional bite, but they were only visible to the sharpest of eyes.

He gazed between Jack's sinewy shoulder blades, until they shifted when he turned around, and Hiccup found himself staring at a smooth

chest, equally strewn with faint marks. The quiet scrutiny continued upward, roaming over his clavicle, a strong neck, the angular jaw and bloodless lips. They parted, curled upwards and sounds began to come out.

...Words. Hiccup knew words.

>"You finally done fluffing your feathers?" His teeth really were *brilliant*.

"Why aren't you wearing your top?" Responded Hiccup on auto pilot. He had voiced almost the first thing that came to mind, and quickly snapped his gaze up, to meet the other boy's moist, unblinking stare. The freckled teenager was exhausted, too tired to properly acknowledge the thrum of his heart, adrenalin depleted to its last reserves. He merely stood before the silvery boy, posture tight and his spine an awkward 'S'.

As if his bones were liquid, the spectre braced his shoulders and performed a perfect backwards roll off the sill, rocking back up on to his heels with thoughtless grace. The dripping had slowed a little behind them and Jack merely jerked his head towards the sopping garment.

"It's wet. I'm drying it out. I thought you were smart, Hic." He answered, as if it was the most obvious answer in the world, which technically it was. Hiccup felt the familiar pressure of irritation build behind his eyes, but relieved it by accepting that Jack saw things too simply to read any other meaning into the tone of the question.

Moonlight spilling into the room, shadows seemed to congregate and thicken in the corners, brooding in their tight little prisons. It was as if the scene had heightened its contrast in the human's eyes, blacks becoming denser, and adversely whites blazed into life. He wasn't sure if this was born of some residual adrenalin spiking his vision, or the fact he hadn't blinked for almost a minute, subconsciously determined to not let the other out of his sight.

"Then when did the rest of you dry so fast?" The answer wasn't even important, but this situation kept making less sense in more unexpected ways as the evening wore on: it was beginning to make the living teenager think he was cracking himself, under the influence of this beautiful yet dangerous stranger. A stranger he'd prefer to keep talking, before he got bored and tried anything else to pass the time.

The pale boy ran a hand through his gravity defying spikes, fingering the frosted locks and staring up into his brain. "I'm... Not sure, actually. Just seems to happen?"

>This was true: The moisture had dissipated, instantly freeze dried away from his body, by the time Jack had reached Hiccup's room, all bar his hoodie. This never used to happen with his tunic and cloak, the clothes he had awakened in. But when they had been exchanged for other items he had found in the past, the new garments had become wet and retained their dampness whenever it rained: He'd considered trying to find the original outfit occasionally to avoid this uncomfortable side effect, but as times changed he grew more self conscious of his ageing garb and set out to find more contemporary pieces. Another way to try and feel normal, donning fashion that was

a part of the people he so often wished he could live amongst, even though they couldn't even see...<p>

A small cough incurred the rapid blink of crystalline eyes, resulting in the (nearly) invisible boy jolting himself back to the land of the living.

>Hiccup had warred with himself about wrenching Jack from his reverie, since he had looked so far away, apparently lost in contemplation for a few minutes. All the while the smaller boy had shuffled uncomfortably, looking around the gradually brightening room as his eyes adjusted to the darkness, growing increasingly aware of the other's half-dressed state.<p>

Glancing to the side, now that he had the other's attention, the boy leaned to the left and felt around until he ran his fingers over a bedpost and grasped a fleecy mass of fabric. Pulling the zip top up and away, an olive green jacket was offered to his guest, as a sign of good will. He wished he was wearing one himself, but the bare boy was certainly in greater need.

"Until_ yours_ dries out..."

That drawn face snapped to the outstretched arm, merely staring for a second, as if he were being offered some kind of priceless treasure. Then, eventually, dusky fingers wrapped around the top, and Jack tugged his wiry arms through close fitting sleeves while the fabric stretched snugly over his shoulders. The size difference between the two became instantly apparent then, when the tiny auburn boy saw his baggy hoodie stretched taut over the taller teenager's well developed muscles. The thin metal zipper's teeth strained a bit when he drew them together past his waist to just halfway up his sternum, obviously unable to comfortably progress. Shimmering webs of ice spread over the hood and cuffs when the fabric finally settled over Jack's frame much like before, that same silver embroidery creeping up and adorning his limbs at an accelerated rate. The wearer took no notice himself, as this was nothing new and merely pulled the sleeves down to cover his hands.

The sight of those dark, viscous looking nails sliding away into the fleece allowed Hiccup to release a breath he hadn't realised he'd been holding, but it was quickly concealed.

The creature that stood before the freckly teenager caused great confusion then. On the one hand, he had broken into his house, been wildly inappropriate in regards to personal boundaries even if they _had_ been friends (which they _weren't_). He had invaded Hiccup's frigging _shower_ and and if the boy's assumptions were correct (which they _were_), Jack had probably been spying on him for quite a while if his demonstrated knowledge of his day to day life was anything to go by.

But in his heart of hearts, Hiccup could tell that his spectral watcher could not be entirely blamed for this: He was obviously deeply unhinged, and had constructed elaborate delusions or other mental blockades to try and cope with whatever he was afflicted with. The remaining solitary time under searing hot jets from his chrome shower head had given the boy some time to mull things over in regards to his guest, and currently there was nothing he could do but keep the other calm.

A pang of misplaced guilt ached in the smaller boy's birdlike chest at a memory he had climbing out of the tub:

Jack, the poor kid, had left silt deposits in the corners of the bath because his clothes had been so dirty. It was incredible to see the true colours that lay beneath the grime, the waxy skin actually a little less so now that there was no longer a layer of dirt obscuring it, and his hair had lightened from grubby storm grey to a gleaming silver strands. For just a beat, one could have thought he was just a regular teenager. That was until his lack of breathing became painfully obvious.

That wasn't to say, however, that Hiccup was going to forgo giving Jack a subtle chewing out. Drawing himself up to his admittedly meager full height, the determined auburn youth fixed the other with a hard glance and thinned his lips into what could only be described as an optimistic grimace. He motioned for Jack to sit and after blue eyes followed the gesture's trajectory, the pale boy obediently did so, drawing in his legs and perching on the edge of the bed with sheathed hands clasped neatly over his knee caps.

Again, the lanky body was deathly still, but with the underlying tenseness that set Hiccup's teeth on edge when he regarded the rapt, unblinking face. The shorter boy remained standing, and tried to find a place to put his own hands where they wouldn't seem intimidating or standoffish. Eventually, they found a home in his pockets, and the teenager found himself staring down at his feet for a moment before speaking.

"You know that people just don't..." He smoothly raised his face up, trying to be as non-accusatory as he could and started again. "I mean, what you did earlier... You know it wasn't OK to do, right?"

It came much more harshly than intended, but Hiccup overcame the anticipatory wince that came when he expected to receive a blow of some kind, and instead rode out his wave of panic, gauging the ghoul's reaction.

The stillness was only interrupted by the tilt of a snowy head. Confusion. Knees drew in tighter, almost an exact mirror for Hiccup earlier, huddled in the porcelain tub, apparently uncomfortable under the scrutiny.

"I just..." Came a soft, quavering voice from behind the olive fleeced limbs, mumbled as lips pressed themselves against the fabric.

A bitter little thought wriggled itself into the back of Hiccup's mind along the lines of serves you right, but it wasn't voiced. Instead, he sloped his little shoulders a fraction and scratched the back of his shaggy head. He really struggled to be intimidating by any stretch of the imagination.

Cautiously, a thin finger reached over to flick on the subdued bedside lamp and dilated pupils shrunk to pin pricks in the flood of brassy light. The pair both had to rapidly blink fluorescent clouds away as they adjusted to the shift, although it took the blue set just a bit longer to catch up. They fluttered shut for a moment, as their owner tried to articulate the rest of his sentence.

"I- Didn't think you'd mind. Since we're the same and all."

The answer was meek in volume, but sure in its execution. It was a correct assumption of Hiccup's that Jack had indeed seen the freckled body unclothed many times before, and even though it was blurry in his spotty memory, he had an inkling that it was quite common for teenage boys to see each other bare, especially if the aftermath of school PE lessons were anything to go by. So he didn't feel guilty exactly, even when a small stutter of tightness lodged itself inside his rib cage whenever he saw a flash of warm skin, connecting dots of melanin in imaginary constructions as he let his eyes descend, mapping and memorizing the flesh. It was the feeling he got whenever he saw something he thought was truly beautiful, and the (until recently) invisible teenager thought that it merely stemmed from admiration... At least, that was until it began to stir other things within him. And the more he learned about Hiccup, the more often his chest felt tight, knowing that he'd never be caught, but also saddened by the knowledge that he could never share what he knew with his friend.

However, that was all before this particular Tuesday, and for once breathing came easy (if he had needed it) to the lonely spirit, having finally been able to release some of the frustration and admiration that had built up over time, at least in a mostly harmless way.

Even Jack Frost knew that even though first impressions counted for a lot, they don't always proceed as smoothly as one would like. This one had gone terribly, and the socially inept little sprite had no idea what to do about it.

Hiccup spoke again, more evenly this time, actually leaning down a little to meet Jack's eye more easily. The pensive brow knit was still there, but those round green eyes were softer, more sympathetic.

"Well, it's really not all right to kind of-" The teenager rotated a wrist, trying to pluck an adequate phrase from the air. "- breach people's privacy like that, especially with a friend..."

The weaker teenager knew he was taking a dangerous gamble here, but currently, it seemed like an amiable approach would be the best to ensure a less bumpy road in the foreseeable future with his ghostly companion. Slender fingers extended to initiate a handshake.

"And isn't that what you'd like us to be: friends?" The urge to withdraw the gesture was huge and sweat beaded on the younger boy's upper lip. Thankfully, the outstretched hand didn't shake while it waited to be filled, which took much longer than it should have.

Initially, Jack had just stared at his host's neatly filed fingernails and mottled knuckles and delicate bone structure, the faintest blue veins stretching beneath the fine skin. It also felt so very small when he slotted his own hand into the grip, squeezing and holding on to the warm palm probably a touch longer than was comfortable.

"I'd like that, more than anything." Breathed the spirit, eyes a

little foggy and a small, glistening smile creased his hollow cheeks. A tiny cough escaped his diminutive friend, and the teenager blinked.

The hand in his own was very still, and the ghost felt like he might have overstayed his welcome with the gesture, so he squeezed once and then let his fingers trail over the warm set, to absorb the heat and he silently wished he could retain it for later. Instead, he just drew his palm back into its fleecy cocoon and held it surreptitiously to his chest, purple lip curling up marginally.

"Good to hear, uh—" Hiccup hadn't really noticed the odd little withdrawal, as the luminous yellow numbers on his digital alarm clock had finally caught his attention, and alerted him to the fact that time had passed much more quickly than he'd realized in all the excitement. As if on cue, his stomach rumbled and reminded him of the fact that he hadn't eaten and now would indeed be a very good time to do so. Bony shoulders tensed further and the boy on the bed hid a widening grin behind his sleeve. Hiccup chewed his lip, staring ahead until the sound passed, and looked down into an expectant pair of cornflower blues: They widened a tad and the grin that creased them subdued itself into a thinner smile.

"Don't you want to get dinner or something? It's way past the usual time." The face remained somewhat still, but not malicious. (His intimate knowledge of Hiccup's schedule however, made the auburn youth's spine tingle.)

Taking a breath, the standing boy inclined his head once, not breaking eye contact. He swept an arm towards the doorway, offering Jack to go ahead of him.

"Guests first." He answered, but the spirit had already vaulted his bed excitedly, breezed through the open door and deftly grabbed the polished banister, perching on it briefly before he rapidly stood and swiveled on a heel. Hiccup jogged behind his enthusiastic guest and caught up just as he righted himself from a silent, elegant cartwheel along the thin rail. He pivoted again, facing his host with a flash of pearls, eyes gleaming.

>"Hey Hic: race you down." He challenged as the said boy rounded on to the landing, confusion knotting his brow, just before the little acrobat launched himself backwards into the air, flipping and falling head first towards the narrow gap between the banisters. The freckled teenager paled, hand in his hair as he rushed forward, reaching out.<p>

"Don't, it's too clo-!" The slender youth slipped through the space, clearing both sides with an ease that suggested there was room left to park a bike, and Hiccup clumsily traveled far enough down the steps to see him absorb any shock into a tight crouch. He was beaming and had flicked up his face to catch the panicking teenager's reaction, who himself had finally remembered that Jack was a weird ghost thing and probably wouldn't get hurt from falling great heights or even landing on his neck.

"I won! Gotta pick up your speed there, kiddo."

"You id-... You cheated!" Blurted Hiccup automatically, not even caring if the delivery blunt. He hopped down the steps but forewent his usual clearing of the last two, padding quickly over the the

rising teenager. All things considered, the other's lack of decorum was the least of the slower party's problems, so after collecting himself, he sighed and motioned towards the kitchen.

"You eat, don't you?" Hiccup queried, surreptitiously making sure that Jack stayed a pace or two ahead of him and flicked on a light. The spacious, clean area was illuminated instantly, and the eager little spirit took up his usual seat opposite the chair closest to the stove as was part of his ritual, unknown to the person who lived there, of course.

"Um, I think I can... Hard to remember the last time I ate, if I'm honest." Mused the seated boy, casting a glance over to the open crossword puzzle. His smart little friend had already managed to fill in a fair amount of blanks this morning (in pen, naturally), but a daunting line of white squares spanned one side of the grid ominously. There was the click from the stove, and tiny blue flames jumped into life.

Hiccup, discretely flicking his eyes into the line of reflections created by suspended pot and pans on his wall had busied himself lifting a glazed, terracotta stew pot out of the fridge and set it on the heat, raised the lid and gave a few brisk stirs with a ladle before covering it once more.

The figure reflected in the polished metal surface looked deep in thought, chin in hand as he apparently contemplated the newspaper page.

"You like stew, right?" Commented Hiccup casually, flicking his head over his shoulder as he brought out a crusty loaf and began to cut thick pieces using a serrated knife. "You're not a vegetarian or..."

A cannibal?

"...Or anything like that?" Finished the auburn boy weakly, quavering the last part. Focusing on the wooden chopping board once more, he dragged a butter dish over the counter and lifted the cover, switching out the serrated knife for a blunted one and began to peel thick golden slivers away from the greasy block. The stuff was spread liberally on to a few slices of bread and they were arranged neatly on the board because he couldn't be bothered serving them on a plate. He pivoted, and stepped over to the table, sliding the board quietly on to the top, capturing the Spirit's attention.

At first, the icicle strewn irises shifted over to platter, staring rigidly and his brow furrowed in confusion when it inched closer.

"You can have some, while the stew warms." Answered Hiccup to Jack's unspoken question, plucking a slice from the board almost as an example and took a hearty bite, the crust crunching in protest between his blunt teeth before disappearing into his mouth, tiny crumbs dotting the corners.

The dinner guest didn't need telling twice, and grabbed a slice that was particularly thick with butter and wrenched it in two, tearing a strip off the smaller half with his teeth and pausing while the simple flavours hit him. It had been so long since he'd even had

bread, and butter certainly wasn't something he easily came across. The fatty, yellow substance melted over his tongue, salty to compliment the natural sweetness of its starchy partner, and the sprite couldn't help but hum happily in simple pleasure.

Hiccup leant against the counter for a few minutes and watched two more pieces of bread disappear down his guest's gullet, unsure whether to stop him. On the one hand, a person could get sick from eating too fast... On the other, Jack looked like he never ate, and was obviously enjoying himself.

Two bowls were filled with the searing, meaty dish a minute later, and blue eyes rounded as the ladle dipped elegantly in and out of the pot before clinking against the ceramic side of the container.

By the time they were set down on the table, the ravenous teenager had already consumed half the bread, but his dining partner preemptively set another two pieces before him, liberally slathered with more butter. A spoon stuck almost upright in the sturdy concoction, and Hiccup took a bite, only to scald his tongue.

A small chuckle across from him then, and through mildly watering eyes he spotted Jack lightly tap the tip of his spoon: tiny frost ferns spread over the head, and a concentrated little swirl of steam coiled upwards when it plunged at last into the gravy. At last, the grinning boy swallowed his mouthful, which was apparently the perfect temperature.

Oh no: He couldn't just blow on it now, could he? Thought the oddly envious boy from his vantage point, still sucking his tongue and pushed the stew aside temporarily to look at the open crossword.

The long line of squares left blank still perplexed him though.

A few, cooler bites of stew were consumed after another minute, but the boy's focus didn't leave the page. A metallic clatter did grab his attention however, and the hazel gaze darted towards the source. Jack's bowl was empty, wiped clean using the last slice of bread, and the diner himself had reclined in his chair with a small, satisfied sigh. He looked so damned happy, and the freckled boy imagined there was even a little bit of colour dusting those bloodless cheeks.

The blue tinged fingers laced over Jack's bewilderingly flat stomach, thumbs twiddling as he realized the borrowed jacket had no pockets his hands could slip into. He was thrumming beneath it, a residual warmth lying under his skin that he hadn't experienced in the longest time. He had tried to keep his eyes off of the other while he ate, but now there was nothing to distract him, and found himself shifting back to the freckled face, roaming his hair and catching the green eyes. Thick brows were raised above them, spoon held loosely between delicate fingers, above a bowl that wasn't even a third done. Something akin to self consciousness welled in the larger teen's gut.

"Wow. You sure have an... Appetite." Commented Hiccup lightly, but he wasn't angry. The muted expression he wore lay somewhere between pity and amusement. It was returned with a tight lipped smile, dark nails scratching the back of a silvery crown.

It became hard for Hiccup to remain entirely tense around his guest,

especially when he pulled little faces like that. Memories of before still swarmed in the back of his mind, but right now... Jack wasn't that person. He was just a hungry, tired kid, and despite his supernatural abilities or ghastly appearance, that wasn't going to change the fact that he probably really needed a friend. The wariness never left the living boy, not really, but he finally let his shoulders drop and after finishing a few more bites of stew pushed his bowl aside. A pen lay nearby, so Hiccup grabbed it, and tapped the end against the table, trying to formulate an answer for his crossword, feeling that the other wouldn't do anything drastic for at least a few minutes. The clue was rolling around in his brain, tormenting him a little.

"What's the hint?"

"Hm?"

"To the word. What's the hint?" Jack had finally leaned forward, hands tucked beneath the table, also focused on the paper: In their time together, the sprite had grown rather good at these puzzles. But it was upside down from his perspective, so Hiccup read it out.

"A seamless door; a perfect cage."

Purple lips pouted in thought, seemingly contemplating several different solutions. The other boy would have been lying to himself if he said that the spirit's fascination with crosswords hadn't surprised him a bit. Sensing that he had a break though, the neat little teenager gathered up the bowls and board to clear them away, rinsing and scrubbing the used bowls at the sink. After a minute however, the other's dry voice piped up, from right behind his ear.

"_Inescapable_."

The wooden bread board thudded against brushed steel. They were back to this.

"_Jeez-!_"

Hiccup whipped around, nose to nose with the silent little specter, pulse jolting. Before he could say anything, the paper was drawn up before his eyes, blanks filled in with laboured, shaky handwriting.

"It's right, isn't it?"

It did indeed fit, and matched up to the overlaps perfectly. The startled teenager tentatively took the paper and stared at that ominous little solution, as Jack looked incredibly pleased with himself, twisting a bit restlessly at the waist. A small affirmative hum from the perturbed party, and then-

"Would you like some dessert?"

Anything. Anything at all the distract Jack while he collected his nerves. As predicted, the gaunt young man gave an enthusiastic nod and backed off, hoisting himself lightly up on a counter, swinging his legs in anticipation.

Quelling the residual tremble in his hands, Hiccup reached into the freezer compartment and pulled out a fudgecicle. He passed it to Jack, resisting the craving he had for one himself, and reached over to grab an apple from the bowl.

A salt and pepper brow crept up Jack's waxy forehead. Moist eyes observed the rosy fruit skin split with a little juicy crunch, and he drew his own dessert to his mouth, giving a thoughtful little lick before resting the slender bar on his bottom lip.

"You're not having a popsicle?"

Apple pieces nearly lodged in Hiccup's suddenly tight throat, and he only just managed to avoid choking, an unexpected flush crawling into his cheeks as he shot an unintentional glare at the speaker.

He must have seemed like such an antsy little freak.

"No I- I'm not in the mood for sweets." He answered quickly, trying to suppress the frantic note in his treacherous little voice.

However, the flushing boy's tight jaw dropped a millimetre as he watched Jack slowly push the fudgecicle past his lips, drawing the bar halfway into his mouth and out again. Long lashed eyes had slid shut, and he did this once more, before dragging the treat out with a muted 'pop'. A pink tongue laved the tip once before the owner sucked in his lips to relieve them of any chocolatey residue. A sigh of appreciation passed through a perfect nose as the frost spirit cracked open his eyes and glanced at the other, who had halted in his tracks, the apple threatening to drop from his petrified hand.

"That's too bad." Jack grinned. A sharp bite and the fudgecicle's tip was gone, then the boy slid off the counter and rested a hand on his hip, leaning easily against the work top's edge, smugly looking forward as he licked away the rest of the pop listlessly.

Needless to say, Hiccup couldn't finish his fruit, wondering if his pursuer had invaded every aspect of his life... His personal life. Why else would he tease him like that, if he didn't know exactly...? A desperate little prayer echoed silently in the flustered teenager's head, begging for the behaviour to be coincidence, but he didn't count on it.

A tight knot of anxiety formed in the boy's stomach as his heart thudded, wondering just how long he'd been trailed, and just how far Jack would go to inch into his life, one way or another. The power imbalance was unnerving to say the least, and it certainly wasn't shifting any time soon, but if the teenager could keep his head, placate his supernatural follower and even possibly train him in some way, Hiccup felt he could survive this bizarre relationship yet.

...For how long however? It was impossible to tell.

* * *

><p>A long ass update for a long ass delay, I am so sorry about that, but life happened and things and junk.**

Um. Yeah. I don't even know why this is a thing, but it's horribly fun and simultaneously terrible to write and it shouldn't exist but meh.

_Hopefully the wait won't be so long next time, since this is a bridge chapter and more stuff is lined up to happen soon. _

_As always, thanks for reading. Comments, feedback and reviews are always vastly appreciated. _

Q.G. Xx

6. Chapter 6

AN: A sash window is one that opens by pushing the frame upwards so it slides into the top frame, or pretty much every window in American Suburbia. Also, the longest recorded Black Mamba was 4.4 metres in length. This was the basis for the one Jack met.

* * *

><p>On this season's finale of "Rambling with Reptiles", the creature features included a special tribute to one of Africa's deadliest residents, the Black Mamba: A snake so poisonous that it is even colloquially referred to by experts as "Death Incarnate".

The Mamba uses its incredible speed to escape threats rather than for hunting. Also contrary to assumption, Black Mambas get their names from the blue-black colour on the inside of their mouths, instead of their hides, which are usually a greyish brown or olive shade.

The effects of Mamba venom include death within twenty minutes of administration, and since the anti toxin is still not widely available, bites tend to be fatal. Their usual method of attack is characterised by rapid, repeated strikes-

"Eh, they aren't such hot stuff." Came a candid little comment to Hiccup's left. Reclined and at utter ease, as if this was something the pallid teenager had done a hundred times, Jack chewed the side of a fingernail, but never drew anything away. Focused on the scenario before them (a vicious mamba attack upon what might have been a squirrel) the story was relayed that during a visit to Africa, many legends had cropped up about the mamba's deadly nature, so the Frost Spirit took it upon himself to find one.

A pregnant pause.

"What, so you just-" Hiccup shook his head, as he tried to comprehend this in his logical mind. "You just walked up to one of the world's most deadly animals and picked a _fight_?"

A piece of popcorn was idly rolled between Jack's flint coloured fingernails before he tossed it above his head and caught it using a skillful flick. He answered with a small, affirmative hum and rested on an elbow.

The auburn boy squinted an eye and raised the opposing brow.

"_Why?_"

Another handful of popcorn was crunched down and paired with a careless shrug.

"I was curious. It didn't do the pin-wheel of death thing I heard so much about though, which was a little disappointing."

A response to this absurd statement was hard to formulate over the audible munching from the ghostly youth sprawled on Hiccup's couch.
Geez, wasn't this kid ever full?

The teenager himself was curled up on the rug, knees held close to his chest as he watched his guest polish off another bowl of the salty snack food.

"Pin wheel of...?"

"Oh yeah! See, there's this legend." setting the empty bowl aside, Jack sprang up excitedly and dropped to the rug on his haunches opposite Hiccup: The smaller boy resisted his urge to scoot back.

"And in this legend, the Black Mamba winds itself up into a wheel and rolls itself down a hill by biting its tail." To demonstrate, pale forefingers extended and rolled over and under each other.

"Like an '_ouroboros'_?" Wait, why had Hiccup brought up such an obscure symbol? It seemed like whenever he got nervous, at least around his new 'friend' (not exactly a rare occurrence), he'd just spout any abstract or mildly interesting piece of information his over-clocked mind could lay its hands on. Apparently though, this reference wasn't lost on his companion.

Jack snapped his fingers sharply and pointed at the other teen, enthusiasm thrumming from his energetic stance and he hopped a little on his soles, a few centimetres forward with a wide grin.

"Yes! That's the one. You read a _lot, _don't you, Hic? Anyway, they're meant to straighten out like an arrow, you know? Fangs first, when they reach the bottom of the hill and _pounce _on ya._"

The boy raised his finger and paused for effect, before he leaned in, glancing from left to right as if telling a secret.

"But it's a _complete_ lie."

"You don't say." A note of sarcasm crept into the freckled youth's voice, but it thankfully went unnoticed by the other. In fact, Jack just nodded, eyes widening.

"I _do _say. Though, they're still nasty little beggars. Here- " the olive coloured hoodie was rolled up quickly to expose a pale stretch of waist. Sure enough, seeming like a patch of only half existent dimples that could be relegated to a trick of the eyes if the light changed. But from where he sat, the teenager could make out the oddly discoloured dots of mildly shiny skin. Each ran in tandem with a

parallel mark, obviously from fangs.

"You can touch 'em if you want, they don't hurt."

"I'm good, thanks." Came the polite decline. With a tilt of the head, Hiccup clicked his tongue once and whistled lightly. "Looks like that sucker got you good."

Smugness exuded the icy being as he lowered the jacket back over his stomach. Raising his forearm, he created a 'head' out of his hand, to simulate a serpent's, even adding a little sway of the creature as if it were about to strike. The motion actually caught the mortal's focus, who followed the hypnotic pan pensively.

"See, they straighten up, stare at you with these deep amber eyes." As if channeling the subject, Jack's eyes darkened with the memory, staring directly into his companion's, who felt very much like the unfortunate squirrel from minutes earlier. When they had started talking, Hiccup had muted the show, but the flickering light desaturated the ghost's skin further, making shadows harsher as they shifted on his face, neck and in his hollow features.

"And this particular mamba," Continued Jack, face blank as he relayed his astounding anecdote "Was a big one. Must have been over twice my size. I searched for her in Zimbabwe, after hearing whispers about a particularly monstrous specimen out there. They weren't lying, I can tell you that."

The listener shivered even imagining the creature, but this sickly feeling wasn't helped by how the story teller was conveyed the tale, still with his sharp nails poised in that uneasy, metronomic 'strike' position.

"Anyway, it was hot so I went in without a jacket, and the mean little varmint just went-"

There was no warning as that razor tipped 'head' darted in like lightning and Hiccup shrieked as it halted just before his nose, and his palm heels came up to shield his vision, burying themselves deep into the sockets of mortified orbs. A pounding heart that leapt into his throat retreated awkwardly as it became apparent that his skin hadn't been mangled beyond recognition.

Jack's dry cackle could be heard from behind scrunched lids, and a brave green eye squinted open.

"You're so skittish, it's untrue, man." Gibed the pale, lanky youth, his voice bright through the filter of laughter. With that, he withdrew the 'snake' and continued with his story as his listener's chest still hitched with panic charged breaths.

"But she got me, like you saw, and for a minute, it got all trippy and I wasn't sure what to do. That was, until this bitter stuff started to well up in the back of my throat: it was the poison. My body must have just kind of sucked it out of the bloodstream for me."

This was madness, against every kind of biological rule that Hiccup could care to name, and for a pulse stopping second, he wondered if anything could actually kill this spirit.

Not that he_ wished _death upon him.

Said spirit had halted, seemingly waiting for a specific prompt to continue. Hoping that he'd chosen correctly, the recovering boy swallowed and asked the correct question.

"What did you do with it?" The look upon his follower's face was the picture of superiority.

"I spat the venom back in its face. Right in its beady little eyes," He made a sharp wringing motion "and put its lights out permanently."

A nauseous little ball rolled up Hiccup's throat, only to be swallowed back down as he watched the 'snapping' of the invisible reptile's neck. Even though the creature was deadly, it never asked to be sought out and challenged, and it certainly hadn't been expecting an opponent like Jack. It just seemed so wrong, especially when the freckled boy had his own slithering companion upstairs...

"It was a little unnecessary, don't you think?" Hiccup croaked, unable to stop himself. "I mean, the snake had no problem with you before you picked a fight with it. Seems unfair to me."

The grin on those pale lips slackened, and the excited thrum that coursed through Jack's limbs gave way to its default, death like state. With the absence of pockets, he bunched his hands tightly into fists and rested them on the joints of his thighs.

"Why do you say that?"

"Because it isn't a nice thing to do." Delivered Hiccup, a note stronger as a flare of passion for the subject emboldened him. This virtuous explosion however was lost on the pallid teenager that sat across from him, who cocked his head to the left.

"It wasn't 'nice'? Hic, that thing could have _killed_ me."

"Only it wouldn't have, because you're apparently immune to poison." The boy's voice raised of its own volition, and the spice of anger peppered his features as ardently as his freckles did. The caution he had portrayed all evening had been briskly filed away by the steely fingers of annoyance, alongside his sense of forethought and tact.

"Jack, you can't just go around hurting- _killing_ things like that just because you can! It's not right. You picked the fight with the snake, but she did nothing to you. It's not an OK thing to do, I mean, what would _drive_ _you_ to do that anyway? Boredom?"

He stood, but dollied his focus to track the other. Little shoulders heaved as the last trickles of irritation faded away, and a sense of self awareness brought back to light his very real vulnerability.

"... I'd like you to go now. Please." Then, as a very quick afterthought in lieu of his outburst. " _Just_ for tonight. Everything has just... Caught up with me, all of a sudden."

While there was a twinge of truth to this statement: mostly Hiccup just wanted the possibly homicidal being crouched across from him out of his house for a few hours while he tried to re-evaluate the situation with the information that had recently been acquired. Jack certainly was not just the socially inept, creepy but lonely lad he'd come to build a partial picture of at the dinner table. No, he wasn't just a mischievous prankster.

He was a killer, and this revelation completed the unstable render.

"-And I have a test on Thursday and it's getting late so-" As punctuation for this sentiment, the boy forced an audible yawn, stretching his arms overhead. "-I kinda need to. Yeah..."

The pale youth's knees unfolded smoothly beneath him, and the lanky form rose like a cobra, looming over his little friend in a way that was not exactly kind. Jack regarded Hiccup from within his sunken sockets, anemic features motionless for a time. The smaller boy swallowed minutely as his mind hastily retrieved a mental folder, withdrawing a file on apprehension with a footnote of regret.

>If Hiccup had concluded something from today, it was firstly not to get Jack angry, and secondly, that it would be dumb to presume that someone like him could be kept away with a mere hard word. If anything, it could incur bitterness, and perhaps form a well for vengefulness to congregate. If the spirit was to return (as he undoubtedly would), the freckled teen sincerely wished it not to be in the role of a poltergeist.

"Uhhh... You can keep the jacket until tomorrow, by the way. Yours is still drying out, right?" reminded Hiccup, with a touch more brightness to disguise the nervous shake of his voice. The suggestion was intended to placate, and from the visible dispersal of muscular tension in the other, also seemed to work.

"Besides, I'm no fun to be around when I'm sleepy. Let's call it a night and we can hang out another time, deal?"

The half glare trained on Hiccup softened as Jack's dull eyes became clear, the watery quality returning with a rapid blink, and the soft smile he sported was underpinned with a pleasant sort of surprise: It seemed as if he would comply for now.

"Alright, Hic. You get some good sleep and then we'll have a great time tomorrow." The boy's phantasmal companion seemed the glow with the prospect of meeting up with his little friend again before he had even left a first time. Plans whirled around his snowy head, muddled in his delicate mind but mostly harmless.

To see Jack's features thaw into something childlike with their excitement, Hiccup felt like he was suffering with emotional whiplash. Exhaustion permeated his frame even as he observed the other rocking on his heels with a seemingly unending supply of energy, and with the blue tint of the television as illumination, it seemed as though the lanky teenager was purely illusory as the frigid mist he produced when the occasional breath passed his periwinkle lips.

An uncomfortable knot in Hiccup's stomach unwound just a bit at

Jack's good humour, and just when the smaller teen was about to guide his supernatural acquaintance to the door, the other had already begun to flit up the stairs with uncanny speed.

Out of puff, the living adolescent arrived just in time to receive an impish glint of teeth as the eager little ghost crouched on the window's sill, arms braced on either side of the painted white frame.

"I've got so much stuff for us to do, Hic. So rest up well, OK? Just leave everything to me."

Just as the said boy was about to reply, that signature wail of wind filled the room and once more blew a mess of fringe into streaming, mossy eyes. Once his balance was caught, Hiccup raced over to the vacated window and down, watching helplessly as the willowy form hurtled to the pavement below.

Only he never hit the ground: Bare heels skimmed with an audible scratch of weather beaten skin upon bricks, only for those powerful thighs to fold into equally strong calves. The result was a rapid crouch that acted like a spring board for the astonishing take off to come. Jack resembled an Olympic swimmer that launched off a pool's tiled wall and dove into the sea of night: His antiquated lungs filled with an exhilaration that carried a sharp edge of adrenaline, each flight as intoxicating as the first to the blithe young soul.

A startled yet captivated Hiccup stared up in awe as the moon bathed youth spiralled into the air with an excited whoop of glee, held aloft by brisk updraughts that seemed to hold that slender frame as easily as a leaf. The boy's scarred jaw dropped as he drank in the spectacle with a breathless sense of wonder.

Jack could fly.

Given everything that happened, it really shouldn't have surprised the human, but as the shouts and eventually the soaring form pulled out of the range of sight and sound, he couldn't exactly negotiate his feelings into clear categories.

Knuckles whitened as apprehensive fingers gripped the cusp of the sill, and he merely looked out into the draughty evening for a time in an attempt to put everything he had witnessed into perspective.

It didn't go so well given his weariness, and the familiar ache swelled behind the teenager's tired eyes. Eventually, he pulled away and negotiated himself into his desk's swivel chair, and reached into his tiny friend's glass tank. As if on cue, Toothless the garter snake wound around his human's delicate wrist in a scaly embrace, and a smile couldn't help but faintly tug at the corners of the owner's mouth.

The affectionate snake raised his spade like head and cocked it to the left, as if the creature could read its keeper's mood. For all Hiccup knew, his tiny friend may well have been able to for all the talks he'd held with him about various problems and events in his life, and the diminutive reptile never seemed to mind.

Words came, but only in shape. Hiccup often spoke to Toothless this

way, since he often disliked the sound of his own voice, so the speech was delivered only in the loosest and faintest whisper. It occurred to him that his technique may also be effective to retain a bit of privacy against the prying ears that might eavesdrop, or may have in the past. The idea that some of the conversations he'd held may have been heard by Jack if he hadn't spoken like this made the teenager's innards contort and wind into a nauseous twist.

"Hey bud, sorry about all of this. A lot's gone on today, as you might have seen." He began, as the snake lazily wrapped around the width of the warm palm holding him and lowered high nostrils to shifting tendons, patiently waiting for his human to continue. A wispy tongue flickered out as a spur to the speaker, who took it.

"...I'm scared, Toothless. It looks like I'm being haunted by a thing I only believed to exist in a dream, and it must have just... Stayed with me. That dream was so vivid, and he seemed so nice in it, and to just see him on my porch like that? It was insane."

Shaking fingers carded through thick auburn bangs, and pulled the hair away from an anxiously creased forehead before the 'loom' ran out and they fell back into place. A choke of airy laughter that could have just as easily been a dry sob burst from between quivering lips, and the boy's impossibly wide eyes stung as he stared into a blank sheet of paper that littered his otherwise tidy desk. Spare trembling fingers stationed themselves as a loose cup around Hiccup's mouth, and Toothless wove dryly over his knuckles. He lifted the snake so he could focus on those black, beady eyes.

"To think, I only thought he existed because I figured 'Hey, there's that thing where people can't dream up other people, so I must have passed him in the street and forgotten.'" The hand around his silently moving jaw descended to his neck, and then, the clavicle, where it rubbed at the bone, obviously a refection of deep seated distress if the vigorous pink chafing was anything to go by.

"Then it turns out he's a weird, icy ghost thing called 'Jack', which obviously means...Well, that some of the stories that my Mom used to tell had a sliver of truth in them."

Fatigued lids twitched as they slid over his itchy eyes, and a flood of images barraged the black veil he'd shut himself behind: Snowy hair, dense lashes that framed gleaming crystalline irises and pearly teeth invaded his mind's vision. That silver lined expanse of pale back and taut muscles that shifted beneath the moon kissed skin refused to budge from conscious thought. A tight grimace accompanied the unintentional rush of heat that stained freckled cheeks and a growl of frustration rumbled in his dry throat.

Sighing in defeat, Hiccup opened his eyes and regarded his scaly companion with worry as he smoothed the pad of a thumb over his head. It was returned with a gummy, solitary toothed 'smile'.

"Well, she might have been off on a few details." A huff of humourless laughter escaped the desolate teen as he leaned back in his chair and offhandedly checked the alarm clock.

No wonder he was tired. Letting the snake nudge at his cheek as they said 'Goodnight' to each other, Hiccup nuzzled the top of Toothless' head with his nose and placed him back in the tank to sleep. After the sash window was secured and its curtains drawn, the skinny teenager traipsed downstairs to check any other doors or points of entry, got a glass of water, and readied himself for bed.

Although he was fairly sure that a certain frosty young spirit had left for the evening, a paranoid Hiccup could not help but feel that his concerns were not unfounded, and so repeatedly glanced over his shoulder to the locked window at every opportunity while he changed. The homework in his bag was still untouched, but it was far from the boy's mind as he swept clammier palms down his warm face and plopped into bed, heart rate already regulating to a steady thud as he switched off the light and yawned wide.

The pillow was so cool against his toasty cheek, and one couldn't have helped to feel content as the caress of the well loved mattress allowed weary bones to melt into a semblance of long deserved repose.

>One... two... three deep breaths, and Hiccup was out like a light. His dreams would not be remembered, but Jack would certainly be with him.

He would be both in the memory of hours past reshuffling in the human's unconscious state, and as the lad who eventually returned and curled up in the slim bough of an ash after putting in hours of preparation for the day ahead, not a stone's throw from his charge's window.

While each star snuffed out and the sky receded into a dense grey, thick storm clouds rolled in as well; They were swollen and heavy with what Jack Frost had cooked up for his best friend, and consequently, the whole town, too.

* * *

><p>So here we are again, and after a ridiculously long time, too! IRL stuff keeps happening so updates have been ****_torturous_****_. So sorry for that, folks._**

Thank you so much for being patient with me. We'll get there eventually, together. ~

As always, questions and reviews are welcome, and thanks for reading!

Q.G. (AKA Bubbles.)

_P.S: An "Ouroboros" is the famous symbol of a snake eating its own tail. 3 _

7. Chapter 7

**AN:**_

**Time Line Canon:**_

_**In the' Rise of the Guardians' art book, it's mentioned that in

the design of Burgess, the creative team were aiming for an ageless look, so it looked like the town could have been from a Stephen Spielberg film, so the early 80's. I am taking this design element to heart, and setting the events of Rise of the Guardians in 1980 for this piece, and the events of the present in 2020. A time period where a few more technological advances have occurred, but they haven't really filtered down into Hiccup's small town yet.

**_-

_**This also gives Jack approximately 40 years to unravel.

**_-

**Also:**-

**A Biro is a kind of ball point pen. **-

**Radiohead's "Kid A" and just Radiohead in general is just perfect for any part of this fic. Just saying. **-

**On with the story...**-

* * *

><p>It would have been a vain hope to relegate the previous night's events as mere hallucinations, or even a production from a feverish dream. But as Hiccup emerged from beneath the veil of restless slumber, that is exactly what he did for the most fleeting spell.</p>

An itch agitated the corners of his eyes, limning them a deeper red as he tried to rub the irritation away. Poorly insulated bones positively creaked when the boy attempted to sit, accompanied by no shortage of grunts and groans as a rush of blood roared in his ears, blue clouds scattered before him.

...What had happened? Why was he so sore, drained, even? The minor obviously did not drink, since he was never invited to those kinds of parties, nor did he have the inclination to attend. Yet he felt as if he'd been hit by some kind of vehicle, and a temporary state of sleep induced amnesia left Hiccup to wade through the debris of events that sluggishly rose to the surface in his deluge of thoughts.

Reluctant eyelids were a shield against distraction as they scrunched shut for a moment, just so that jumbled memories could sort themselves out against the blank slate of darkness.

There had been dodge ball yesterday, so at least the aches that currently plagued his limbs and back could be adequately explained that way. He had been coming home and... Bare feet. Another boy, a vagrant-

"..."

Hiccup's stomach dropped along with the penny of revelation, abruptly inundated by a rather startling recollection of the night prior.

His form tightened into a kink of dismay while it all came back in disquieting flashes. The fact that he had been followed, haunted in fact by a being he most probably had no defence against... Even thinking about it conducted panic.

But when that was laid out in front of Hiccup, the sillier it sounded: A winter ghost with devastatingly good looks no less was stalking him, that and he also happened to be the twisted, psychopathic embodiment of a childhood story? It all sounded so absurd, and the bleary teenager allowed himself a parched laugh at the expense of his own over-active imagination. He dared to crack open his eyes once more and stretched above his head.

"Man, I should really lay off the sweet snacks before-"

Words died and tumbled back down into the growing hollow of Hiccup's stomach at the sight that greeted him.

A blue sweatshirt was draped by its hood over the door of his pine wardrobe.

The garment was worn, harboured a tear or two, washed out by seasonal wear, and it was one of the most terrifying things that the teenager could have witnessed at this precise moment.

It was confirmation that he wasn't hallucinating. Reality it seemed could prove to be far more terrifying than fiction.

Fright bleached the colour from the boy's surface and immobilised him for more than a few ticks.

A frantic scan around the room also affirmed the absence of an olive jacket that usually resided at the foot of Hiccup's bed.

"...Oh Hell."

Blinding white was all Hiccup met when he swept his curtains back. Freshly woken eyes squinted as they surveyed the scene outside his window, brows raised in conjunction with a widening jaw drop.

The glass was thickly painted from its corners with ferns of frost, which somewhat obscured the view until spindly fingers wrestled open the sash and hooked beneath the wood.

Where regret might have been appropriate, Hiccup only stared out in shock as he leaned from his window, nippy air prickled sharply as it launched an invasion against the open neck of the boy's shirt.

This snow drift had to be at least a foot deep. While it was evident that a plough had visited his street, the road still looked hazardous. Trees that lined the pavement each wore thick white caps, their branches laboured under the shimmering weight of deceptively heavy burdens.

It was only just November.

This sort of weather wasn't due for another month at least, so the boy idly wondered if the town was prepared for such a freak snow storm. Although it was hard to pull away from this astounding sight, Hiccup managed to slide his window pane down and cut off the lung searing chill, going instead to flick on his DAB radio.

Twiddling with its station slider, a sharp cacophony of pop blurred into six or seven different genres until the listener stopped at the

even keel of a local newscaster's practised, dulcet tones.

"—Another serious collision along Maine Street this morning, due to the unexpected snow storm that seemed to catch us overnight—"

Cold flushed cheeks were instantly leached of their colour. Hiccup knew in his heart of hearts that the cause of all this had been none other than Jack: There was no other explanation, since this weather was unseasonal, and if his deductions were correct, this seemed to be within his skill set.

"—brings the injury toll to twelve, with two unfortunate casualties.—"

"...No. "

Were people really dying, merely because the ghost wanted to play, to impress_ _him_? A deep seated queasiness soured his thankfully empty stomach, quaking limbs giving in as the boy dropped into his desk chair.

Take it easy Hiccup... Perhaps it is just a snow storm out of Season. Surely Jack would know that doing something like this was harmful?—

Even if he didn't believe it himself, Hiccup's mental dialogue soothed him somewhat, and he eventually found the strength to rise. There were no announcements to say that his school had shut for the day, and it rarely ever did; His town was tough, stubborn, even more so when it came to snow days. A brief look was cast over to Toothless, who looked to be rather content, curled up in a little sleepy coil. It only occurred to his owner that he had not yet been fed, and a crash of guilt filled his chest. It should really be sorted before he left.

A sigh left the boy's chest as he made to leave and get ready for the day, when an urge made him look back, and regard the shadows beneath his bed frame. Glancing about cautiously as if someone were stationed in the wings to ridicule him, Hiccup dropped to his knees and inspected the area underneath.

Being a tidy individual, there wasn't much under there apart from an occasional dust bunny and summer plimsolls. Instantly, the teenager felt entirely foolish for entertaining an idea that Jack would honestly hide under his bed, ready to snag his leg with ghastly fingers and drag him into another world, kicking and screaming—

He's not the Boogie Man, Hiccup. Get a frigging grip.—

Like he might grab around your ankles given half the chance? Think about it, he's not a stranger to breaking in.—

I wonder how he does that, can he walk through walls or is he just really good with locks...?—

Guys, shut up. No one is grabbing anyone.

It had been a while since the boy's thoughts had broken off into

three separate corners of contention, but he tried to ignore the occasional spells of bickering as a quick shower was taken (though not before a check behind the door and uselessly locking the window).

He dressed in his father's room.

Loaded rucksack against his back, it was hard to deny the bone weariness that plagued his reedy frame, but the minute Hiccup reached for the fruit bowl, his fingers trembled and retreated, a tight knot of nausea as a stopper in his throat. His rational side reasoned that it was probably residual anxiety that stole his appetite and that he'd be better by lunch.

Resignation took a station in his mind as he reached for the door knob, only to remember Toothless. Shrugging off his bag, Hiccup skittered to the kitchen and took a mouse from the freezer and placed it on the lowest fridge shelf to defrost in some sealed Tupperware. But for the time being a few slivers of diced salmon would have to suffice for his scaly friend.

Hiccup ran upstairs to deliver the snack: Fish was one of his favourites, after all.

"Sorry, bud. Things have been hectic. Try to get this down and you can have a real dinner when I get back."

The snake barely moved and flicked the tip of his tail, as if to say 'Whatever' in his human's direction.

Unable to resist an eye roll, Hiccup jogged back downstairs and retrieved his bag, barely prepared for a rush of freezing wind that barraged his exposed face when the door was finally yanked open. Pulling his scarf up over stinging nostrils, large headphones shielded his ears from the sharp winter nip as they thrummed_ Radiohead _to accompany an inevitable hike to school.

In weather like this, walking was often the best option for punctuality's sake as narrow roads could become clogged with crawling traffic, even after they were ploughed.

One booted foot sank into the snow after another, pulled out with tremendous effort at each pass as they created tiny trenches. As he trudged, Hiccup couldn't help but think that the world would be so much scarier outside his musical bubble. He knew the silence that snow offered, a muffler against any tweets of life or busy rush of traffic, and given recent events this was not an atmosphere he wanted to reside in.

_Not that Jack _would_ make a noise if he snuck up on you_-

A hand upon his unsuspecting shoulder wrenched Hiccup from his reverie, paranoia prying both a cry of surprise and a useless flail aimed in the direction of his would be assassin. The sudden heel swivel resulted in a slip that landed his bony backside six inches deep in snow, from which the panic stricken boy was met with the knees of none other than Astrid.

She could be identified as such from the striped tube socks she favoured regardless of the weather, and the fact that she bent down

to lift her featherweight friend effortlessly from his soggy seat.

The girl was laughing, that much could be told through her face until she knocked Hiccup's headphones back and opened up his ears to her frothy chuckles.

"-were you at, Hiccup? Man, you look like you've seen the crypt keeper or something." She joked while she stooped once more to pick up the fallen ruck sack, dusted it off and offered it up. For once, Astrid had her hair down around her neck and ears for insulation, topped off by a crocheted teal beanie.

Hiccup appreciated how beautiful she was then, her golden locks spilled in loose waves around fur hooded shoulders and rosy cheeks, illuminated by the rebound of light from surrounding snow...

Not that she'd ever go for him, but a sigh escaped him as he resented the fact he just really couldn't like her that way.

At least she could make someone else happy.

That thought somehow didn't appeal either, as most of the guys he knew in this town were jerks.

Just like you for thinking that.

Oh please, they're not good enough for her and you know it-

"Hello?" A snap of cold reddened fingertips brought Hiccup out of his internal arguments once more. He blinked, and returned his focus to an unimpressed Astrid.

"Jeez, I need you to come back down from Pluto, Space cowboy. We've got stupid History first period and Mr Mildew hates anyone being even a second late." Still a little spaced, Hiccup fell into trudge beside his ranting friend as they made their soggy way down the hill. A smile perked his lips, accompanied by a little chuckle of agreement.

"I hear you. Granted, if we're honest here, the guy is probably old enough to remember most of what he's teaching us anyway..."

So on they chattered, and for the first time in what seemed like forever Hiccup could feel the tension wash from his shoulders, thoughts of invasive spirits miles away from his current situation.

The pair skidded rather literally into class a minute before the bell, as the hallways were slick with the snow drenched treads of hundreds of students and found Fishlegs (formerly Fergus) waving towards two empty seats at the back.

The enormous teenager was so named by bullies in his past because of the shrimpy pins that supported his rotund frame as a child. When adolescence worked its magic however, Fergus Ingberman took the nick name for his own, to render its power among bullies useless from that point on.

Not that they picked on the mammoth of a boy any longer, he had proven to be quite the Berserker with his strength when provoked these days: Three unfortunate instigators could attest with noses that still didn't sit quite right in their faces, all in Hiccup's defence...

1 Year Ago.

The diminutive boy would remember that day occasionally in equal parts fondness and horror.

Until that point, he thought the maximum locker capacity for human bodies was a strict '1', but Fishlegs promptly shattered that assumption when he had compressed all three harassers into that convenient steel cage and managed to close the door.

Up until that point, he and Hiccup had been rather friendly, living in the same neighbourhood as children and travelling through grades together, with Hiccup often inviting the often solitary boy over to his and Astrid's table at lunch or gathering in town for the occasional movie night. But when Hiccup felt himself being held aloft, his toes grazed the ground as Fishlegs picked him up and dusted his rumpled outfit down.

Nothing was exchanged between them for the longest moment apart from an awed stare from the shorter party. And then, in reply, Fishlegs dimpled his cheeks into a wide, genuine smile, touched lightly with concern as he set the other back down again.

"...Those guys have always been dopes, especially when it comes to not picking on someone their own size."

>Metallic rumbles, muffled cries of protest and empty threats were heard to their left, at which the practical giant giggled with a voice that would never match up.<p>

"It's a good thing that I'm heavier than all of 'em. Are you OK there, Hiccup?"

All the said boy could do was stand dumbly up until then, only to nod sharply and gather up his scattered rucksack. Fishlegs stooped to assist.

"Y-Yeah, I'm great. Um. Thanks... A lot." A history book and pencil case was shoved into the bag between halted words, and their gazes met for a moment. The larger boy had a much purer green in his eyes, something that Hiccup had never noticed because of a lack of attention on his part, but it was actually quite... Pretty. They creased with a smile as Fishlegs pushed a small spiral bound sketchbook into daintier hands.

"Eh, don't worry about it. You'd do the same for me, if you could. Also, uh, you may want to have that looked at," He added, a stubby forefinger circling a general area against his own cheek as a mirrored diagram to Hiccup's, who instinctively reached up and winced as he touched the hot, tender spot. "It's going to swell for sure. We need to get you an ice pack or something."

They wandered to the nurse's office, yells from the locker finally dying down into distant whines, and eventually silence after a few corridor turns. The pair walked in silence, until-

"Thanks, man- Again. I mean it."

"Already said it, Hic. Don't sweat a thing."

A few feet from the nurse's office, Hiccup stopped and looked up at Fishlegs, his round face gentle and open as ever, if not a little bemused.

"... Come over to my house, after school. We'll get Chinese and play the new "Penultimate Prophecy". I've not tried out the new Co-Op mode, yet."

Fishlegs blinked for a second before raising a palm. "You don't need to do-"

"I want to. Meet you at the steps after last bell? I know a great place just a few blocks away." Hiccup insisted as he clapped a hand against a beefy shoulder. The soft, infectious smile broadened into something even warmer as that sandy blonde head nodded once.

"OK, see you at four then... But seriously, you need a compress: Your eye's starting to look like a grapefruit."

Safe to say, the boys had been fast friends ever since, and Astrid quickly warmed up to Fishlegs as a matter of course. But as they sat in the back of the classroom, brain cells in rapid depletion, even friendship couldn't help them under the unwavering scrutiny of Mr Mildew. No one ever dared to speak out of turn in Mildew's class, because despite repeated complaints, nothing was ever done about the sour old crone's propensity to sometimes scream like a crow and thwack students over their heads with his ancient wooden ruler.

So most lessons were carried out in relative silence, save for the drone of Mildew's dusty voice, which allowed idle minds and doodling hands to work.

'Bromidic'. Adjective. Stale, dull, trite. Alluding to bromide based sedatives._

Hiccup won a game of 'Scrabble' once with the word on a triple point tile (45 points), and it was painfully pertinent right now. Gale force winds had really begun to pick up, bringing the top layers of snow up along with them so the scene outside seemed to be obscured by an icy smoke screen. Even the stronger window panes rattled against their screams.

Despite the deep sleep that Hiccup had partaken in last night, he felt exhausted now, and glanced down at his blank note sheet with a sigh. He tapped his biro against the paper softly, before he let boredom work its magic, manifesting in a series of doodles.

At first, the usual fare: insipid houses, stars and flowers spilled up from the bottom left hand corner beneath sparse notes about colonial settlers in their local area. Why they would ever need to know anything about the subject, the teenager had yet to fathom, but he did half listen and jot down the odd shorthand note amidst his scrawling masterpiece.

Weary lids drooped as his pen continued to move of what felt like its

own volition. Planets orbited feint rules and snowflakes flurried in a margin. Birds flew between ramblings on the early settlers, and branches spread long and lean beside them to perch upon.

Below them, a lake smooth and glassy... Frozen, save for the deep, ominous cracks in its otherwise pristine surface. The artist's head grew foggy, eyes flickering minutely as consciousness contended valiantly with fatigue, yet still he drew.

A dark sky, pinpricked by stars, hastily shaded with scratchy ink lines that halted at the presence of snow. And a boy, fingers and toes as black as his hair was white, staring out at Hiccup himself, he'd wager.

Another line, this time for a focus drawing of intense sunken eyes that were shiny with moisture, as if they were about set to weep-

If the school had bowels in place of their pipes, they certainly voiced their complaints just then. Every drowsy head in the classroom snapped immediately to attention as the whines and groans of plumbing rumbled around them. Mildew actually ducked beneath his desk when the lights finally fizzled out with an unnerving 'clink' of halogens. Students promptly began the chatter excitedly between themselves, when an announcement crackled into life over a tannoy with its signature chime, ending their fizzy susurus.

"Attention students: It looks like the unprecedented weather has taken a bigger toll than we thought. The school plumbing system has frozen solid, and our main generator has blown out. Until repairs are made, students are to return home for the foreseeable. That will be all."

Another chime, and the broadcast ended. The teenagers were silent for a few beats, and then an eruption of cheers and shouts that Mildew had no chance in hell of stopping burst forth.

"Yeah, fricking _snow day_!"

"No more school!"

>"Good because I didn't do my homework!"<p>

"Fucking _A_!"

Amidst this excited walla, Hiccup was the only one who sat completely still, quietly lost in his own growing cloud of dread. Their shouts became background noise behind a hammering heart rate that filled his ears as shook fingers shook, knuckles white around his pen. Another breath, and the pulse consumed Hiccup's senses, especially as he looked to his left, into a white, endless void.

That wasn't right, there should be building, people... But no. All that stood between him and nothingness was a flimsy piece of glass.

All at once, a deadly hush put an end to it all: The wind, panicked breath, Hiccup's _heart _prior to an ageless voice filtered starkly through on an icy draught, with what could have been a graze of craggy of lips against his ear.

"_... Want to make snow angels with me?_"

The biro snapped with the jerk of a thumb, consequently blotting it black before he tossed it aside. Hiccup screamed, long and loud, and bolted out his seat, away from the window and abruptly bemused classmates. Astrid whipped her head around as Fishlegs lowered his useless halting arm.

"Hiccup?" She called as he wrenched open the door. "Where are you-"

Slam.

"...Going?"

Boot soles squeaked against a slick corridor floor as Hiccup sprinted down it without direction. His chest heaved, and it took about three more ill planned turns before the boy realised that he was alone. There were no window in this particular stretch, no white oblivion to fall into, and at last the bony-weary frame slid down a wall, face in hands.

Hallucination? Precognition? Or had Jack really- NO.

This was nuts, even he could tell that. Jack couldn't have been in the classroom with him, there was no way... Not that Hiccup had turned around. Or thought about where he was going when he proceeded to blindly run the other way.

Where was he right now?

At last, quaking hands peeled away from effort flushed cheeks so the teenager could observe his surroundings. A door handle clicked, earning a mortified stare in that direction-

Just in time for the dismissed students to pour out into the halls in dense throngs from their classes.

A huff of air released itself from pensive lungs, and Hiccup shakily stood, walking his palms up the wall for support.

A familiar, welcome voice promptly caught his attention, as Astrid jogged ahead of Fishlegs towards him. The crowd parted as the blonde boy loomed, and the girl easily reached her friend, shoving a hastily stuffed back pack into his arms.

"What the actual Hell, have you lost your mind? Where in Thor's name were you off to in such a screaming rush?" She chided, only to drag Hiccup by the elbow back down the murmuring hall and towards a now open pair of doors.

Upon seeing the distant blinding brightness outside, the accosted party shook his head, violently yanked away and back-pedalled.

"N-Not yet!"

Astrid and Fishlegs turned in tandem to their stammering friend, and exchanged a brief look.

"Hiccup, come on, we have to leave, they're closing in half an hour."

Tried Fishlegs, but Hiccup took another step back from his reaching arm. Astrid folded hers, head cocked.

"Seriously, dude, you're acting crazy... well, crazier-"

"I'm staying here until they throw me out, that's that," Asserted Hiccup, every inch of him stretched upwards into his meagre height. "And I would really, really appreciate it if you stayed with me until then."

Astrid's pale brows dropped into a subtle furrow, but she wasn't angry, only bewildered.

"...OK. But it's like you're scared of the snow or something. It never bothered you before- Heck, not even this morning._"

The smallest of them remained quiet for a moment, but began to walk towards the cafeteria, mumbling something about wanting some hot chocolate while he waited. Dutifully, they stuck to his side, their expressions devolving further into worry as they observed a nervous glance whenever the trio passed a window or heard the strain of frozen slush inside each wall.

At last they arrived, only to find that hot chocolate wasn't available from the vendor due to the lack of power. The hall was quiet, sparsely populated with shivering, chatting students, and Astrid leant in close, her low voice now audible in privacy with her friends.

"OK, spill: What's gotten you so freaked? Whatever it is, we need to know."

"Yeah, we're your pals, it's kind of our job to help each other out, remember?" Added Fishlegs, hands on his hips and proudly drawn up to his full stance.

Hiccup looked between them meekly, and let out a sigh. A few false starts, and the boy dragged his hands down his face once before he spoke.

"You wouldn't believe me, even if I told you."

A challenge. Astrid always enjoyed those, and pulled her obviously vexed chum against her with a rakish arm around his shoulders.

"Oh yeah? Try us."

* * *

><p>OK I finally know where I'm going from this point, so thank you for your patience and I am so sorry for the delay. Dissertation work has been a nightmare. Bid thank you to Root-Beer-Riku for Beta reading. Check out their tumblr.**

As usual, any questions, suggestions and reviews are always sorely appreciated, and once again thanks for reading!

**_Bubbles. Xx_*
**

8. Chapter 8

The night previous, 3 a.m._

The way in which Jack Frost generated ice was actually an intrinsic understanding of fractal equations. Each flake's needles, clusters and plates were copies of a parent, perfect clones that branched from its middle and ever outwards when sublimation from water vapour to crystals occurred: what he knew to be a part of his centre, his very being was actually a marvel (and perhaps even a magical aspect) of nature's mysteries at their most beautiful.

This thought would never cross his mind, especially when a superhuman amount of concentration had to be diverted into the collation of a storm. Back when he had a physical point of focus, the assembly of flurries and drifts was a mere flick of his wrist and a cackle when chaos ensued.

Now, the process required every limb, a current that spread, flowed and recoiled back into its source in a strenuous but endlessly satisfying loop.

Although breaths weren't something he required, a few were taken to ground his restless toes and thoughts. Air rushed in and back out through Jack's nose, that had become more corporeal with the knowledge that someone knew he existed at last, after all this time. Such a sweet thing, how the added strength electrified his hollow bones and clammy skin. The corners of his lips rose even picturing the back of Hiccup's damp hair and an elegant stretch of sumptuous speckled neck-

Jack swallowed the saliva that had welled in the dip of his tongue and backed slowly out of the trance that threatened to consume his motivation, in order to accomplish the monumental task before him.

Wide open spaces usually helped in these situations, so there Jack stood, confident that day wouldn't splinter the darkness for many hours to come and stretched his arms high above his crown. This upwards pull tugged the boy up onto his toes, a puppeteer's string that elongated his entire body until it seemed ripe to pluck as a bow string.

Abruptly, Jack swept his arms back out to the sides and raised his face, wrists and palms exposed as Hiccup's short sleeves rode up on them: a crucified man spending his last moments searching for a merciful god. Another breath expanded his slender ribs and sculpted shoulders, and Jack listened, deep inside his own body for something that he only revealed itself in these pure, silent hours.

Perhaps it was the mental flicker of rosy skin and soft auburn waves that allowed its quick discovery, but once the spectre found it, he wasn't going to let it leave again any time soon. Thready and staccato as it might have been, there was no doubt that the timid flutter inside his chest grew more prominent with each second that passed. Discomfort was welcome if it meant that this wondrous rhythm had finally returned to Jack, it let him know something beyond the cold and empty space that usually occupied his torso, gave his mind a jolt that set him into a near lucid state. The more he thought about the obviously blushing boy through a window, sheets tangled with

his legs and smoothed over his waist, the more fervently it raced, pounding against its cage in an attempt to escape.

In response, a long sip of air was dragged almost painfully between his lips, tentative and slow as the consumption of scalding tea, and he let it spill out again, thick and bright under the moon's suspicious scrutiny.

Jack's eyelids quivered and fell as his body relaxed from its tip-toe crucifix, alone now with his poignant internal metronome. He rolled his shoulders and neck, and swept his wrists together with such bone closeness that they clacked. Two chilly lamp lights lethargically unveiled themselves in the darkness when a wave of dense clouds blotted out any lunar glare, but even with its absence, the boy's silvered hair and skin shone in the gloom.

It was the beat and the phantom, alone in the dark, but there was no mistaking that the devil could perform wonders on more than one's idle hands. That impossible pulse was sluggish to begin with, but it became obvious that it was rapidly inclined to unwind Jack's limbs as blood invaded them and raised his legs into light steps. They were small at first, but became a gazelle's faultless bound at last when his heart gave a sudden drop, and clammy palms slammed into the moist earth.

Thunder rolled.

Effortlessly, sturdy arms carried Jack's tumble forward into a perfect inversion and sure feet worried grass blades only slightly as he continued. A single, isolated orbit clockwise moved Jack's thrumming rib cage, and at its end an arm unfolded like a ribbon in the breeze. Bones seemed to remember their place and formed this liquid limb into a right angle that quivered when Jack shakily pulled it south, as if what he was straining to yank downwards offered great resistance. The temperature plummeted, and the grass grew sharp and brittle as the spirit pivoted but didn't even give it a thought. He wasn't thinking much currently, eyes barely open and mouth bowed as he swung his head in tandem with his spin to lend it more momentum.

Rapid steps fell without fault one after the other, disorientation a foreign concept to the one who himself served as an eye to his hurricane. Still the entranced spirit twirled and gathered speed as his arms folded like a mantis on either side, flattened palms slicing the air without mercy, widening the vacuum.

Moon bleached cheeks darkened to mauve while a smooth brow creased in effort. Jack's heart rate increased exponentially with each revolution until it became a whir that was lost between the screaming walls of wind.

At last the sky was choked with cloud, both coal and ash, but it was undoubtedly swollen with frozen precipitation that threatened to burst before time. A sheen had formed and frosted on Jack's skin as he finally lifted up and off the earth, his body now looser, a master of aerial silks set to fall in reverse, buffeted ever higher, every muscle pulled tight and stark against tendons that no longer had the will to fight.

A crackle of static diffused downy white tufts the closer Jack got to

the engorged, swirling beast over his throbbing head. It had to be soon, he could feel it in the fever pitch that threatened to take him then and there. The blurred ascent relaxed and all at once the grinning ghoul found himself approximately ten metres below his creation, held in a hang time that stretched into an era. However, just as Jack felt his frame begin to succumb to gravity's stern wishes, he gave a sharp bark of laughter, with all the humour of a split in a glacier, and thrust himself sharply into the bank with a stab of concentrated wind. His hands lost their graceful arches and instead formed claws far crueler than any blade.

The mass was pure, undisturbed and utterly tranquil the moments before Jack split its stomach with a rush of flint and ripping arms.

A feckless whoop of elation tore from Jack when he was flung back by freshly freed innards: Snow obliterated the seam and belted off in different directions on feral gusts and eddies of white cascaded as the lone body in that sky-borne avalanche allowed himself to swept away. His drift among the flakes was casual and thoughtless, serene and riddled with relief with each flurry that swaddled and teased his bare neck and feet.

Plum lips parted with breathless laughter to give a glimmer of delight back to his own work, some of Jack's finest in what he felt was an age. Even though only a minute could have passed when he finally grazed the ground again, the world was already thickly blanketed in white and muffled against the harsh sounds and dirt that it normally offered. He lay there on his back for a while, extremities calming down as the current that flooded them dwindled back into his centre. The centre where the rev of his heart had finally wound down but didn't leave entirely... No. This storm was a gift to one in particular and what kind of teenager enjoyed taking tests when he had his own personal Snow Day distributor? A quiver of anticipation made Jack wiggle as he imprinted the arrhythmic beat into the fingers pressed over his sternum.

The chuckles finally subsided and his lips snarled into a yawn as glassy eyes grew heavy and blearily studied the perfect blankness he found his cheek now nestled in. Perhaps he would rest for a little bit, it had been a fair while since he had done anything like this: Besides, no one else would be up for hours.

Just a little breather, maybe even a very short nap (or whatever he did to constitute sleep these days) wouldn't hurt him at all. Hell, he might have more energy to play with Hiccup tomorrow.

Yes. That sold it to him, and for the first time in decades Jack Frost actually slept, hands to his heart, curled up snugly in his borrowed hoodie. He even imagined a tingle of warmth beneath the press of his fingertips as his pulse melted away into the inky wash of his unconsciousness.

Bork Boldson High School, Now.

"Pull the other, there's bells on it."

Of course they didn't believe him right of the bat, who in their right mind would have? At least Hiccup could be assured that his crazy wasn't contagious, and he wrapped his fingers more tightly

around the steaming cup that he had been able to procure when the school's auxiliary power finally kicked in. At first, the idea of a hot chocolate had been a tantalising one, but as he leant over to the thick brown liquid to take a sip, the aroma had turned the boy's stomach every which way. Now he sat with it in front of him and out of nausea range, but kept his hands around it so as not to waste the sparse heat. If the pair across from him noticed anything peculiar, they were kind enough not to mention it... Until Astrid's remark.

Although their scepticism was expected, it didn't make Hiccup's sigh any less disappointed. He chewed his lip for a moment, averting his gaze, attempting to think of a more rational way to explain his situation, but he couldn't and gave up.

"I don't know what else to tell you, Astrid. For all the time we've been friends I've done my best never to lie to you, either of you." His words and eyes were earnest as he continued.

"Now, I don't know about you guys, but starting to make up stories that could get me committed to a nice padded room doesn't seem like the greatest move." Hiccup leant in a few inches closer, despite their already hushed voices, and his friends instinctively mirrored him. "Please... Just humour me, because I swear on my mother's grave, I'm telling the truth. "

That caught their attention. If there was something that Hiccup never took lightly, it was the mention of his late mother, and to swear on her? Well.

Astrid grimaced as she watched her friend peel his fingers away from the cup to knead his brow and tried to swallow down an uncomfortable sour lump before Fishlegs beat her to the punch.

"How do you know you weren't sick? You could have been having a freaky dream because of a fever or something." The larger boy furrowed his brows in sympathy as Astrid picked up the slack. "Yeah, no offence Hiccup, but you aren't exactly the springiest of chickens today. Perhaps you ate some bad chicken-" As they tried to rationalise his story into indigestion, Hiccup grew desperate and cut them off with a sharp jerk of his head.

"But- But that's just it, I have evidence that this guy exists." He insisted, a touch of hysteria threatening to crack his words. The girl reached across and gave his shoulder a grounding squeeze.

"Dude, calm down, we'll bite: Let's say hypothetically that what you're saying is true, where is this proof?"

Without hesitation Hiccup thrust his arm out the side as he half glared at her, finger jabbed adamantly at the window panes that rattled uneasily against the constant barrage of gale force winds. Astrid rolled her eyes but endeavoured in not losing her patience.

"OK, the early snow storm," she said, her voice still on an even keel "But that's all it could be. If your story's going to stand up, we're going to need more than that."

Fishlegs nodded in solemn agreement. "That's right, it's not that we don't trust you, it's just... You're asking us to believe in something that, under normal circumstances, only lives in books and movies."

Hiccup knew they were being sensible about this, just like he would be in their position, but it didn't mean that the situation infuriated him any less. At last, he brought his arm despondently down again and resisted a very strong urge to sniffle. He swallowed the feeling (and mucus) down though when the deflated teenager suddenly thought of one infallible item that could convince his friends that he wasn't delusional.

"I have something of his!" He whispered excitedly, his hands so anxious that they almost crushed the hot chocolate. Astrid recoiled from the splash and briskly took the cup away before any more scalding drink could end up spilling over Hiccup's knuckles.

"Jeez -the fuck, dude?" She chided, tempted to smack her clumsy friend upside the head, but it became obvious that he wasn't listening.

"That hooded jacket, the one I'm not wearing today?"

"What Jacket?" Astrid puzzled, tilting her head as she dabbed the table with a napkin. Hiccup blanched incredulously.

"Seriously? I've worn it, like, every day near enough for the last year... Green?" She slowly shook her head, at a loss because it never rated high enough on her mental priorities to remember how people were dressed. Fishlegs however hummed affirmatively as his features glimmered with recognition. "The one with the yellow piping on the cuffs?"

A twinkle of hope lifted Hiccup's own face, silently thanking whatever entities there were for Fishleg's pachydermian memory. He rose into a crouch, his palms spread as he encompassed an invisible object.

"Exactly, I don't have it any more because he borrowed it. But," Hiccup paused for effect, triumph radiating from his now less sallow face. " as a result, I have one of his only belongings, a sweat shirt!"

"I thought you said it was a ghost?" Asked Fishlegs, feeling that he'd missed a trick somewhere, but determined not to have his thunder stolen, the recipient tried to breeze over the question.

"Well, yes, he is. But for some reason his sweater could get wet and he took it off-"

>"How did he get wet? It didn't rain yesterday." Astrid interjected, sharp as a tack, and narrowed her eyes to that effect before continuing. "And on the subject, why are you lending this thing clothes?"

That flattened his gusto then and there. This was a part of the story that Hiccup had artfully omitted during his account to save face, but unfortunately the anxiety of being caught out painted his own red anyway.

"Er."

Astrid and Fishlegs exchanged a look. It wasn't rare to see Hiccup mildly flustered about one thing or another, but neither could recall a time that they saw him outright embarrassed, or, dare they say it, bashful about something. But here it was, as if they had barged in on something private and doubtlessly uncomfortable for their friend to recall. For this reason, another knowing glance was exchanged, a silent vow to attain this information, for the benefit of Hiccup, naturally.

Fishlegs went first.

"So how did he get wet? If we're going to help out, we have to have your completely honest and unabridged version of what happened." Astrid concurred with a curt, professional nod.

"It's the only way, man. Can't hold anything back, or we might miss an important detail."

The Cheshire cats sat there, perched expectantly on their elbows for Hiccup to spill his guts. Feeling more than a little mousy under their gaze, Hiccup plopped back into his seat to fidget for a beat before he sighed reluctantly and reached for his bag. His history notebook was withdrawn and set out on the table.

"If I'm going to tell you this, then it's only fair that you know exactly what I was dealing with." He warned grimly. Astrid blinked, her interest piqued further.

"You drew him?"

He nodded and efficiently thumbed to the most recent page. What the pair had been expecting was a cruel, awful entity with icicle talons and a wicked, fang lined grin. Hiccup was always good at capturing likenesses with a weak tendency to exaggerate, so one could expect an accurate depiction. What they were met with was a tall, broad chested, well proportioned young man, probably no older than eighteen or so. Apart from his ragged, old fashioned clothes and dirty toes, it was easy to see he was good really quite looking in a certain melancholic way. A wind tossed nest of stark white sat rakishly atop his head, fringe barely just sweeping the tops of the most watery but soulful eyes Astrid had ever seen on a drawing. This was completed with a perfectly sloped nose and a shy but enigmatically impish grin studded with a flash of perfect teeth. The girl blew the loose hair away from her eye, grinning despite herself.

"Woah-ho-ho, Hiiiccup! I'd let him haunt me any day of the week.~"

Hiccup recoiled, positively aghast. "Astrid, for Thor's sake-!"

"No wonder you were sleepy in History class, that's one Hell of a day dream."

"It isn't what it- Gah!"

"You're blushing!"

"Am not!"

A murmur of agreement left Fishlegs as he obviously examined the sketch more closely. "With that deep set gaze and devil-may-care attitude, he's like a young Montgomery Clift. Or James Dean." >The girl frowned "But doesn't James Dean just look like James Franco?" <p>

"James Franco _wishes._"

>A bony fist pounded the table top and brought the pair out of their discussion with a jump. <p>

"Will. You. _Please_. Focus?" Hiccup churned out through gritted teeth as he snatched the book back and stuffed it carelessly back into his bag. Astrid raised her palms in mock surrender, cooing her apology.

"Alright, alright, don't get your boxers in a bunch. We're just saying that you could have gotten worse luck in the 'scary' department: _This_ guy just looks like he should be haunting Hollister."

A callous laugh left Hiccup, and before he could pull it back, he blurted his most forefront thought.

"Oh yeah? He's not so cute when he's creeping into your damned shower!" A noise caught in the teenager's throat, one that spoke volumes of regret and a mighty need to retract his statement, but the damage was already done.

"He did _what?_" Gasped Fishlegs, the humour gone and now looking more than a little mortified as he stared into Hiccup's sullen, karmine face.

"Hubba hubba, scrubba dubba! Did he wash your back?"

Astrid on the other hand was biting her knuckle in a bid not to cave in on herself with laughter, but it was clearly a losing battle. Tears had already began to spring and her face rivalled Hiccup's in its colour. He was adversely on the verge of actually sobbing after this farce.

"No. Just. Please. I... I'm begging you," And by the tremble in his voice, even Astrid in her crippled state manage to start controlling herself. He really meant it. "I just... By the way Jack talks, it's like he's been following me for weeks or who knows_ how _long. He knows things that he shouldn't, stuff that's just not meant to be..."

The fluster was still present, but had dulled into a tired, feverish glow that spotted Hiccup's cheeks as he cleared his throat shortly.

This sobered up Astrid entirely and Fishlegs got a water bottle from his back pack and pushed it across the table only for it to go unacknowledged. The weary teenager went on, visibly dismayed.

"He just... _barged in_, but I didn't hear him, like he didn't even bother with the door. He climbed in fully clothed and watched me for a while. " Now he faltered, irises darting about as if he were reliving the scene.

" And... And he looked at me, I mean really looked_. And he...He touched me." Goose flesh rose, and Hiccup tried to rub the frisson away with limited success. A similar, cold, nauseous feeling had began to pool in the pits of his audience's stomachs as they listened, regret and sympathy filling them in equal measure. The boy went on.

"Damned sociopath. He just doesn't get the concept of privacy, or personal space, or even just common decency!" Though his eyes glistened, Hiccup willed anger to harden them and set his gaze in the middle distance to centre himself, possibly lost in the recollection. "He's freakishly strong, likely unstable, and I don't even think I've seen the tip of the iceberg where his powers are concerned."

A breath was taken slowly in through his nose, and funnelled back out through his wisdom gap.

"I'm not safe behind locked doors, and I don't know what he wants with me." This was a white lie, because judging from previous behaviour, the boy at least had an inkling_. Mossy eyes refocussed and grew colder still.

"Anyway... To answer your questions: the shower got Jack wet, and for some reason the sweater stayed that way so he took it off. I didn't want him walking around half naked- For Stockholm related reasons, he surmised "-So I gave him my jacket. Long story short, it's still hung up in my room."

Another gust outside battered at the windows, causing the trio's bubble to burst and then left them to ponder for a spell as to when the cafeteria had emptied out completely. Bar the howls outside, the hall was completely silent, and Fishlegs turned to peer up at a large wall clock fixed above the exit that read "1:25". Five minutes until the faculty said they would be shutting down for the day.

The way that the blood drained from Hiccup's complexion was really starting to tell his friends just how frightened he was of of stepping outside, but they had to eventually.

"If you want, Astrid and I could walk the same route home until we get to your place?" Fishlegs offered gently, opening his hands to extend the invitation. "Even in the snow it's not too far, and I doubt the bus is in service right now."

"Uh huh, and with us by your side, there's got to be some kind of protection in numbers." Astrid agreed, cheeks appled with a confident smile. Hiccup looked from her, the fearless maiden, and to the kindly giant, and very slowly shook his head.

"Do you really believe me?" He asked, a worry etched into his mouth that neither of the others could quite fathom. They were quiet for just a beat too long. Narrow shoulders sagged in defeat, and the boy stood to gather his things when Astrid spoke up with a rare desperate note.

"Don't take this the wrong way, but it's a lot for us to swallow, OK? We know that you'd never lie to us." She hesitated, but stood as well. "Besides, if Jack does exist, and is as powerful as you say...?"

"Then how can I fight him, right?" Hiccup finished, and slung the bag strap over his shoulder, eyeing the door. "It's probably for the best if... You don't believe this. Forget about it and put it down to bad casserole."

Although he be sure if it was correct, the teenager sensed that belief seemed to give Jack some sort of kick."

And the last thing I want is for you guys to be in danger.

"Don't worry about walking me back, it's fine. Just go on." He insisted, because perhaps it would be better if he kept them at a distance for now, at least until he could figure something out.

Astrid stood, stone faced, her eyes unreadable as she considered his words for a long moment.

"OK. "

That flat word almost crushed Hiccup's spirit with its weight. He knew that Astrid could be poignant, but something told him that he's really done the wrong thing.

"You don't want us right now, so we'll leave you be. Come on, big guy." She turned, and caught Fishlegs by the arm to get him to follow her. He did so, clearly perplexed but didn't dare to question it right now. Nevertheless, he shot a glance over his shoulder to Hiccup, who remained rooted to the

spot. The skinny teenager wanted so much to call out to them, beg them to stop and stay with him, but he didn't as the double doors opened and fell in again with a cushioned whump.

The minute hand jolted to "1:28" on that freaking wall clock, and the boy knew that he would have to go. Each step felt as if he were wrenching his feet from ankle deep tar, but it became easier as he progressed, and by the time he made it to the front entrance he refused to break stride. Imaginary pitch transmuted into real snow that had really grown very deep despite the plough and shovel efforts throughout the day. Without the indoor lighting, it became apparent just how thick the clouds above were, because if Hiccup didn't know better, it could have already been twilight. Even the glaring yard lights had flickered into life to combat this unnatural gloom, and not another soul could be seen in the place as the sky sprawled ever more blackly overhead. Previous footprints had already been glossed over with a fresh veil of snow, and it didn't bother to slow as the boy struggled with a scarf to keep the damp chill off his neck.

The world had become quiet, an almost holy silence some might have said, attributing this weather to a divine being who felt it was time to bring peace and cleanse the land with an overlay of white.

Only two knew better, but the second was quickly traversing the yard to reach the chain link fence to hopefully get home without a disturbance.

It was intensely wishful thinking, because about half way through his trek a familiar puff of air pressed itself closely to the only

unprotected portion of his nape. This was immediately followed by a vice like arm that slithered mercilessly around his middle and stifled a yell.

"_What took you so long?~_"

* * *

><p>Sorry for the massive delay, but I had IRL commitments. Regardless, the time gave me an opportunity to think, and as a result I have a large head start on the next chapter. As always, thank you for your patience, and any feed back or comments is immensely appreciated.

((P.S: There is now an 8tracks dot Com reading playlist for this fic. Just search "Pursued" (The sounds of Stalker Jack) and look for a blueish album cover.))

Can't wait to catch you next time, where this fic increasingly becomes like an episode of Frigging _"Supernatural"._

9. Chapter 9

_ **AN: **_

_ **TW, some... possibly non/dub con content ahead. **_

* * *

><p>The main Yard. _

Hiccup gasped and struggled until a hand like death reached up and pressed itself to his chest, pushing him more closely to the body at his back. He grew rigid when a cold little nose nudged behind his ear in what he could only guess to be some kind of affection.

"Ssshhh... It's only me." Jack crooned, the freezing air from those words prickling every hair on his captive's head.

"Jack!?"

The boy wheezed and took a stab at loosening the arms that snared him. The ghost just eased his grip only so that Hiccup could turn to face him, looking ever so pleased with himself. The indignant fury earned a blink, but it was underscored with a delicious ruddy shade that made Jack grin unabashed.

Hiccup did not see the funny side. Did Jack just conveniently forget everything they discussed last night?

"What are you doing?" The boy seethed, straining to break away. "This isn't appropri- Just. Get. _Off_!"

His complaints went unheeded, and died in his throat when Jack unexpectedly held him tighter to then rub his clammy cheek over a burning one, his enjoyment rolling off his tongue as a purr.

"Oh man, sometimes I forget how warm you can be." The spirit mused to

himself while he drank in the heat and smell of the one who again trembled in his hold. He took this warmth and gave back only frigid puffs that curled in Hiccup's hair when he finally managed to wrench his face away from the rime. Jack didn't mind any great amount, feeling as though his brain had been steeped in hot mulled wine: the more heat he sapped, and the more he did so, the more he wanted.

A scream wanted to escape Hiccup's throat but was promptly stifled when Jack nosed his temple languorously, a pallid hand from the boy's waist rose to push into the back of his scalp and twirled the auburn strands around restless, sooty fingers. With every second that passed, the human felt more exhausted, as if the ghost's affections were draining him.

Hollow coughs snapped the boy out of his daze, roils of nausea threatening to rise from his gut as he summoned the strength to finally push back against the steely grip with arms that violently quivered.

At last, the spirit focussed and canted his head quizzically at his friend, who looked more than a little green through the rosy tint that ever so slowly receded into the corners of his vision.

"Hiccup, what's the matter? You're shaking." Murmured Jack, and daintily swept an auburn cowlick back behind a flushing ear. The boy flinched and looked away, his skin crawling as he pressed once more, firmly, against the ghost's sternum.

"I'm shaking because—"

Think Haddock, think.

"Because you're COLD. Let go of me, please."

Consideration flashed through the luminous irises, but after a moment Jack unwound his arms, his hands still stationed on Hiccup's waist. The boy had to resist the urge to sigh as he glanced up into that blithe blue gaze, but accepted begrudgingly that this was, however small, an improvement.

Excitement seemed to pour off the taller youth in waves, his pallid form thrumming as if expectant for his little friend to notice something. Apparently he couldn't wait that long.

"So, what do you think?" He grinned, those brilliant teeth glinting from cracked lips. "I was going to try and catch you this morning, tell you that there was no point going to school," A sheepish shrug, as if Jack were admitting to a minor social faux pas. "But I drifted off waiting, and when I woke up, you'd already gone. My bad."

I wonder if my message made it through the vent?

Nevertheless, Jack looked rather proud as he surveyed the mini tundra with a few avian flicks of his head. "Thing is, I can't remember the last time a storm turned out so well." He continued, running his fingertips absently up Hiccup's waist, who automatically pushed down on Jack's forearms just as flinty thumbs pressed into the base of his ribs. The other didn't move further against the push, but locked eyes with wide green ones again, a twinkle behind the cornflower stare.

"It must be because I know I have someone to enjoy it with." He cooed in conclusion and raised every hair on skinny freckled arms. A lead weight dropped into the depths of Hiccup's stomach while his face struggled to compose itself into a mask of gratitude, tinged with real concern.

"Ah hah... Um. This all looks very. Pretty." He tried, willing his heart to stop its frantic bounce inside his chest. Sharp nails unconsciously curled into his back.

"But, err... Don't you think dropping something like this is a little sudden? N-Not that it's not really cool and impressive and all of that." Hiccup gabbled in a rush as he moved closer to automatically shift away from the more imminent threat of pin pricks against his kidneys. Apparently his willingness to draw into the cool alcove relaxed the spirit, even in the wake of his little friend's words. Absently, Jack hummed and perched his strong chin atop the auburn nest below it.

"It's all fine, I've watched this town for years and you guys have always been great in this kind of weather."

One eye squinted in protest to the unwanted weight upon his head, Hiccup thought it best not to bring up the news reports he's heard this morning. Even in the arms of possibly the strongest being he might ever encounter, the boy had never felt less safe in his entire life, but he couldn't retreat into steely talons, nor could he push past the cold, solid mass before him: Stuck between a rock and a sharp place, it appeared. An unhappy huff of fog left his nose just as Jack relinquished his hold and lifted his chin in order to cup the human's tenderly. Calloused thumbs swept rhythmically beneath rouged cheeks, gentle, repetitive brushes as Siberian blue soaked up pursed pink, fervent red, and finally nervous green that glanced divergently south. The recesses of the ghost's mind echoed momentarily as he tried to decipher his friend's peculiar expression.

The penny somewhat dropped.

Hiccup didn't like it. There was no reason why he shouldn't, Jack reasoned internally, the kid just got an early winter break of unspecified length.

He should be thanking me. I did all of this for him.

No, that couldn't be it. Hiccup was just... He was just still shy! Yes, that was all. He's never had someone who knew him so well before, and he might just be getting used to the idea of a friend who would never leave his side. Never. Jack liked him too much to see loneliness sag freckled features ever again. Goodness, he was smart sometimes, it was almost scary.

"Uh, Jack... can I-?"

Resolve renewed, Jack chased the flickers of worry from his own brow using a bright smile and affectionate nuzzles to his friend's cheek. A small squeak escaped the smaller boy, cutting him off at precisely the moment that Hiccup summoned the nerve to try and actually voice his concerns.

"Can you see what the storm really did?" Chimed Jack, eyes gleaming deep in their hollows, catching the yard lights. "Of course you can, because Hiccup, I've gotta tell you." He continued, with a smirk of self satisfaction at both his quick tongue and even faster thinking.

"It's pretty spectacular."

Invigorated, the spirit pulled the other flush to himself rather boldly, the space between barely even a seam any more. Air rushed out of Hiccup in surprise he found his face forced briskly into the cool crook of Jack's neck, but he managed to grind out a questioning echo.

"What the storm really did?" He half wheezed, a heavy lump of dread reuniting with his guts as steely arms anchored him firmly to what was essentially a chilly wall of sinew.

"Uh huh. Just one thing though.~"

Swathes of sharp wind sliced concentric circles into the powder around them, violet lips dipped in to whisper their command.

"Hold on tight.~"

**Bork Boldson School Building, West side. **

And the braiding had already begun.

Not two minutes after Astrid has announced that Hiccup could go and make his way back alone, Fishlegs found himself stood shin deep in snow around the school's west wall. He was taller, so logically the boy stood behind Astrid as a matter of course, but while they waited, he was subjected to his friend's anxious ministrations as she wove her loose hair into progressively elaborate knots. They were very pretty in truth, and Fishlegs sometimes wondered if the girl was even aware that she was creating these intricate plaits consciously. But this was not a practice of vanity, rather, one could gauge Astrid's stress by how artfully woven her tresses were on any given day. That morning, she had been utterly relaxed, and had worn her hair down past her shoulders to this effect, but as the pair waited for what the larger teen presumed to be Hiccup's appearance, a series of crosses and loops had begun to form where a golden cascade once freely lay.

Fishlegs cleared his throat.

"Um, Astrid, not to be... Assumptive, but you don't believe Hiccup's story, do you?" A pause, as the anxious fingers stopped threading. "Like, you don't actually think he's in any real danger?"

"Of course not," Astrid blurted quickly while she spared a glance behind, but didn't hold it as she returned to her vigil around the building's edge. "But he's certainly dancing on eggshells about something. I think we should just watch him out of the yard, just to make sure he doesn't try to bunk up in there." She finished, rolling her eyes at the possibility of Hiccup's paranoid antics. Her companion raised an unconvinced brow, and she sighed. Loose fingers raked through the braid and diffused it with a few easy pulls.

A murmur of agreement was cut short as the boy heard the heavy thud from the main doors, both teenagers suddenly alert to the one who exited them. It was Hiccup naturally, bundled up tightly as he paused on the steps for a moment, obvious to the pair that observed him from afar. After what seemed like only a blip in resolve, the skinny youth began to push through the snow in a walk that could have amounted to a jog under different conditions. Relief washed over his friends as they saw him scurry along, mostly unhindered, across the yard: He was alright, just having some crazy delusions after ingesting an undercooked omlette or-

The boy's progress halted and he thrashed violently to himself with a yell of alarm. The blonde duo drew back, bewildered and unsure whether to make themselves known, because after all, the motion at worst had looked like a flamboyant reaction to an imagined threat.

"Is he. Practising improv or-?"
>"Shush, Fish, he's still talking."

As they watched, even from this distance a low murmur could be heard across the space, blurred as it was by the winds between. Not a single word could be deciphered, but there were pauses as if Hiccup was in conversation: The auburn head angled this way and that, his body flinched and curled, and little hands pushed against some kind of invisible force, to meet what could only be described as tangible resistance. Either their friend had been taking covert mime classes, or something was actually going on. This thought was too absurd to entertain by sane standards... But since when had the trio ever been considered such a thing?

Although they didn't look at one another, both the girl and her accomplice felt treacle darkness swell deep in their stomachs, similar perspiration dotting their upper lips as they saw the auburn boy's face snapped up forcefully. Blue eyes squinted, determined to read Hiccup's expression, but the resourceful Fishlegs rooted in a pocket to yank out his new phone. A Mokia Lucida, acquired after a recent birthday was flipped into life and had its lens cast in his tiny target's direction. The Camera boasted a ridiculous 23X optical zoom, and when the app's viewfinder picked up the freckled boy's face, it was easy to make out his discomfort and scarlet tinted cheeks.

Only... That wasn't all Fishlegs observed. A barely perceptible flicker, easily missed if the lad weren't so vigilant, wavered his screen, and he could have sworn that there was a silver outline, similar to the kind that a sheet of glass possesses when caught in sunlight. He blinked, and hit record, his focus now the same as Astrid's as yet more unfolded. The girl stumbled back as

she witnessed Hiccup being indisputably dragged through the snow, his head tucked down as if avoiding collision, and a cyclone of powder whipped up around the braced boy. She was forming some sort of confused expletive when the single body shot up into the air like a bottle rocket on steroids, a scream in his wake. It was then that the pair tore out of their hiding spot, Fishlegs following Hiccup's progress with an autonomous camera pan. His panic was still rife, and he clutched at his scalp as Astrid yelled after the collapsing tower of white flakes, brimming with terror as she considered the flickering shape that dragged him up through the densely packed sky

and out of sight. Only his discarded backpack remained settled in the snow.

Helplessness and shame were the two immediate emotions that encroached in the teenagers' minds, fascination underscoring Fishlegs', and indignant (yet worried) rage below Astrid's. But as they stood there, thunderstruck and at a loss of what to do, they sank back into the drift, air knocked from them. The girl's shaking hand gathered up the bag beside her as the broad lad stopped his recording.

It was then they turned to each other and mutually agreed that maybe... Just maybe that this 'Jack Frost' could indeed exist, and that for all his so called 'love', their friend could be caught in truly dangerous clutches.

While under his own steam Jack could have launched both he and his passenger into the sky without much trouble, a sudden jolt of energy flooded him upon their ascent and sent them shrieking through the cloud bank with both the rate he sliced through the air, and also with his euphoric yells.

Hiccup on the other hand was screaming because he was being abducted vertically and at high speed, clinging like a spider monkey to his captor because it was certainly the only thing keeping him alive. His wails of fright were lost in the chest that he refused to move his face from, streaming green eyes scrunched tight as the outer temperature plummeted. It wasn't much warmer in the embrace, but he still grasped at Jack's torso, feet useless beneath him as hope rushed away faster from his heart than the ground below them.

Another vaporous barrier was smashed through, little beads of moisture dampened auburn strands and sparkled as they froze in silver ones, earning a crow of joy from the ghost. He couldn't recall the last time flight had been so easy. Trickles of power gushed through his body, and his heart pounded beneath the other's hidden brow. Jack idly wondered if Hiccup felt that pulse, the one that had begun again with his mere presence in the lonely spectre's life. The rhythm that grew exponentially over the last few days and had made Jack feel more whole than he had in decades, though he could be wrong: Time was a little fuzzy in that misty mind.

Still, the other boy had time to discover it, in a different setting if he chose. Perhaps equivalent in its thrills...

Although he didn't measure distance by any conventional means, Jack slowed their ascent at a frankly preposterous height, and looked down at the one who held on so tightly. The human was motionless, save for the trembles in his shoulders and hands. Those mossy hues refused to lift and meet the ones that surveyed his quaking head.

"Uh, why are you acting all spooked? Don't you trust that I can carry a little thing like you without getting tired?" He joked, nosing the boy's crown to try and peel his face away from his chest.

The boy blenched just a little at the contact, but knew that his flighty counterpart would not give up his attempts to coax him out of the admittedly frail security that his current ignorance afforded. Reluctantly, the freckled face rose in individual degrees, exposing

his cheeks to a dry, hostile atmosphere that chafed them. The cloud they surged through had cleared in the breezes that their ascent and sudden brake caused, so the moisture had already begun to dissipate from Hiccup as he opened his eyes by millimetres. He looked directly up, into the infinite swirling grey and violet above their heads, adamant that if he remained focussed there, this could just be put down to some stress induced blackout and he was only sleeping peacefully while temporary psychosis receded. This illusion was shattered when, after several calls of his friend's name, Jack actually jabbed his nails sharply into Hiccup's sides, prying loose a small yelp. Although they didn't break fabric or skin, their pinch made the smaller boy wince, and begrudgingly regard that blithe, playful countenance.

"It's incredible up here, isn't it?" The spirit chatted as his human companion unexpectedly found himself in need of deeper breaths, and so took his time to reply.

"It's... Very... High." He heaved, disorientated and unaware of just how far up they had travelled. Something wasn't right, but the logical hemisphere of Hiccup's brain palmed it off as left over fright still sloshing in his veins. Jack, of course, did not perceive the antagonistic undercurrent.

"Sure is! You know, the view really is great up here. I'll turn so you can take a gander." And good as his word, revolved them to that cleared patch, tilted in such a way that the terrified passenger had little choice but to contemplate the unfathomable height and very solid land mass below. It was too late for his eyes to deny what they had witnessed, so instead of screwing them up tightly, they widened and drank in the sprawling sight.

It was actually... Incredible. A pure prairie interrupted by the crisp dark accents of buildings that protruded from a clean white canvas. Because of the darkness that the cloud bank created, lights in both homes and the streets embroidered the neat, muted threads of roads in brassy pricks of illumination that sparkled as Hiccup's blown wide study diffused them.

And the effect was vastly spread: There was not a patch to be seen that the weather phenom's touch did not reach. The horizon in each direction was engulfed in a thick, undoubtedly icy fog that looked as if it wished to roll in and consume more of the town it surrounded at a moment's notice.

Burgess was caged in.

This revelation wouldn't hit the perceptive youth for quite some time, because as he leant agape, soaking up the beauty and impossible scope of the expanse he beheld, an ache began to form in the back of his lungs. It was small at first, and fairly impressive given that Hiccup was not in any way a mountaineering type.

"Wow... It's..." Was all he managed to murmur, and the oxygen debt began its choke hold on his consciousness. A dark aurora flickered before his eyes as the high altitude made itself known, the air extremely thin to his system. If the climb had been gradual and his body was allowed time to prepare, then possibly he would have kept his head. The fragile human had been woefully unadjusted and as a result of his already present panic and a sudden loss of nourishing

breath, the black took him in an unanticipated sweep.

Still chuckling at his little chum's reaction to the wonderland he'd created, Jack barely registered when the other's tight embrace slackened, and only managed to react when that thin frame grew limp, forcing the phantom to scramble and scoop up his precious cargo before it plummeted to Earth.

Hiccup's features had taken on a sickly pallor comparable to his deathly acquaintance, but he still took dainty sips of air as Jack looked on, realisation dawning as he intrinsically felt the poor aerial quality at last. The foolish ghost bit down timidly on his wind worn lip.

"...Whoops."

So perhaps flights should be more leisurely and less ambitious in the future. We live and learn... sort of.

Thoughts to this effect swam languid laps in Jack's mind as he carried the ragdoll of a boy pressed to his chest, set into an easy earthbound glide. Although his concentration should have been on their descent, the ghost couldn't help but occasionally drop his gaze to the slender form tucked so snugly in against his shoulder, marvelling at how perfect the fit was as his vibrant auburn hair thrashed in the wind, arms carefully folded in neatly over his stomach.

Despite the mishap, Jack was still rather buzzed for a reason he couldn't quite pin point. It had been... Well, in all honestly he didn't really remember the last time so much fire had surged through his hollow bones, each muscle inundated with a vivacious crackle that was both mysterious and intoxicating. Little thought was currently given to its origin.

No, all that mattered right now was the recovery of the one he now held tightly, both in his arms and heart. Although he could sense that Hiccup got a little nervous and intimidated by him now and then, Jack speculated it was because he was larger and more powerful than his charge, but the Guardian wanted to assure the other that this was OK, normal even. If he was going to protect Hiccup, then it would be not only logical but beneficial for Jack to be the strong one. There was nothing for his friend to fear: that strength could be controlled, he was certain of it. A small simper spread Jack's lips as he burrowed into the unconscious boy's hair for a moment, to breathe in that lively scent.

"I'll never let anyone hurt you... Swear on my life, I won't."

The house came into sight, and the pair homed in: No one had paid enough attention to the skies to pick out the outline of an unconscious teenager, a blurry cut out against a dull, violet veil of cloud. Everyone was either already in their warm homes or stuck in their cold cars as droves of snowflakes continued to tumble down above them.

Usually, Jack would slip in through the window, because more often than not it had been left unlocked, or even better, ajar. But today, with the house's owner not presently inside, he doubted that he could push the sash up and proceed indoors with no struggle from

locks.

This wasn't a worry though as he sat Hiccup against the window pane, his slender form easily accommodated by the snow caked sill, safely wedged into the frame's corner. Satisfied with his arrangement, the spirit hovered for a moment, pleased to actually pick out a visual echo of himself when he stared into the glass, faint but certainly there.

Chortles slipped out, but he got back to the matter at hand: this trick was possible even when the ghost possessed far less energy, but required a lot of concentration to perform. But now, with a beat to his heart and a fizz in his soul, Jack barely had to think as he transmuted his bones to vapour, skin incorporeal as thought. He was a moonbeam refracted through glass, not dissimilar to the heedless cast of sceptical limbs through his body on a busy street, but this technique was special. It was different, in that normally inanimate objects had a tendency to meet him with resistance, but if he focussed and dug deep, phasing was an option.

Osmotically, Jack slid between solid particles and found himself in that dim, tidy bed room with the ease of a diver slicing through calm waters, offhandedly noting the presence of his own ragged hoodie slung over the wardrobe door.

Not that he had any intention of taking the jacket gifted to him off...

Earth blackened heels pivoted on the carpet and eager hands flicked the lock on the window, throwing up the sash with a flourish. As predicted, Hiccup's natural inclination towards the vacant space behind him caused his limp body to fall back into the room.

Though not before clipping his cranium narrowly on the frame's top.

Jack was already poised to scoop up the sleeping lad, but winced at that 'clunk', teeth set into an unsettled grimace as he cradled the auburn scalp and pulled ice dampened legs in from the sill. If his hands weren't full, Jack would have smacked his own pallid forehead in self depreciation. A milk toothed curse slipped from between his lips, but it went unheard by the slack form he now carefully arranged on a made bed.

To start, Jack stripped away the boy's jacket and shoes in a fashion that an adult might a drowsy toddler, and laid him down on the covers, contained and content to watch the other sleep for a spell.

But as the minutes trickled and pooled into just over an hour, lilac veined hands began to pull themselves in and out of sleeves, nails drummed against tense thighs, clicked together restlessly as Hiccup refused to stir, bar a twitch or the superficial breaths he dragged audibly in and out.

Perched on the bedside table, Jack began the rock, tap his feet, anything to try and expel some of the pent up vitality that had settled in his joints.

Eventually though, a inkling that became a itch evolved into a need,

so much that trembling, chilly fingers magnetically reached for warmer, partly moist ones. They didn't initially react to Jack's touch, even as he slid from his seat and knelt, each nail subject to intense, unblinking reverence. Each was a little pink, well tended spade, daintily nestled in a bed of marginally calloused skin. Even as the ghost splayed those freckled fingers, their owner didn't move, so much that Jack dared to raise the delicate ridges to his face, and scrupulously dotted each nail with a nippy press of his lips. He progressed even more tentatively and trailed along slim, stolid digits, cool mouth slack as his lashes lowered, basking in the heat.

Pause was only given when Jack reached the dry, flushed rise of Hiccup's knuckles, and the boy hummed in his sleep, limbs in the process of sluggishly regaining sensation.

Vigilant blues locked on the subtly writhing form, ready for the hand in his grasp to pull away. But as Hiccup turned his head to the left, and thus towards his companion, a curl in his blissful mouth popped a dimple into his cheek, lids still closed.

Curious to this unanticipated reaction, Jack risked turning the hand he held, his own spare slid along the underside of Hiccup's freckled forearm and made him shiver just a tad, but still he slept on. A cold thumb swept the inside of Hiccup's dewy palm, and Jack pressed another kiss to the heel. A soft little sigh left the human as he dreamt, barely aware of the tiny tremors that traversed his ulna, down in the depths in which he rested. Pleasant tremors.

Aaah.

There it was. So even if his friend was shy while awake, there was no denying the look of contentment that these simple attentions seemed to draw out. A mouth inclined to smile slackened as the phantom contact paused transiently, but Jack's work soon resumed.

He was making Hiccup happy! It was going to work out, he knew he was right about this, ever since that night he happened upon his little friend when still unseen, the other compromised but undoubtedly in pleasure... He knew he could pull out those sounds far better than Hiccup could alone.

Arctic lips puckered and pressed tenuously to a pulse point that was no longer thready and lingered, treating the thin flesh to delicate sucks and whispers of frost curled into feathery ferns, papery cheeks flushed faintly with colour. Living fingers spasmed as affection was lavished further up the boy's speckled arm, long sleeve smoothed up to bunch at the elbow, airy gasps far more poignant as they punctuated the pecks against his limb.

Jack had to lean back, take a moment to compose himself because the foreign influx of heat in his stomach overwhelmed him, incurred rapid blinks as he caught the open mouthed countenance of his companion.

Seeing the other boy nude (and angry at him) was one thing, but witnessing the one he cared so much for wearing such a naked expression of enjoyment and knowing he was the cause? That was another thing entirely.

If he had seen his actions from the outside, Jack would have still probably not identified their licentious nature through his narrow frame of reference, as he folded the arm back and crawled up over the sheets to lay like a leaf upon Hiccup's torso. If the little gestures could incur such satisfying responses, then surely stronger advances would make him even happier, it was only logic.

Three moments were dedicated to the contemplation of his next approach: The mouth was perhaps a bit strong for starting, but he recalled the little shivers his nuzzles had generated before.

Hiccup's bare forearm drew level with his head as Jack placed it there, tracing listlessly into the pale skin on its underside with a nail. A frigid nose found its home beneath his friend's lax jaw, trailing up to a pale pink ear shell.

An honest to goodness moan seeped feebly from Hiccup's mouth, inexplicably spurring Jack on as he grinned against the column of the other's throat and gambled a kiss to the tendons that jumped below his bared teeth. Another fragile keen tapered out, the human's legs twisting restlessly, glancing Jack's thighs with his knees as they drew into autonomous angles. Sharp pearls dug heavily into a lip as the spirit tried to focus, consider that it might not be an excellent idea to get carried away so quickly, but this was all swept away by the cage of his friend's legs and the subsequent friction between them.

One who was literally never touched was sure to be sensitive, even to the most minor unfamiliar stimulation, and so that elegant spine buckled into an arch, resulted in yet another brush of their flush hips that brought the ghost to a flustered, quaking pause. His breath washed thickly over Hiccup's throat, and the sleeping boy groaned, head tipped back and exposing yet more taut skin that grew red with the wandering cascade of searing blush that spilled down from the boy's face.

He wanted-

Needed it all. To taste every salty, heated patch revealed to his frozen gaze.

Talons gently encompassed Hiccup's spread thigh, raked shortly along it as the trace on his forearm turned into a pin against the sheets. A glacial tongue slid up a sweat tacked neck-

As mossy greens flickered blearily back into reality, fever bright as his body was apparently under some kind of attack. Paralysed and sluggish when another moan choked out, no longer faint but gruff with wakefulness. What on earth was going on? A rush of nausea stung his throat when the room tilted, but stopped in its bitter tracks as a cool mouth sucked his skin and left the youth numbly flabbergasted.

He wanted to move, but his hips were caught between the mattress and-

"_Oooh_..."

Rumbles of approval were imparted into his blazing skin until Jack

detached himself to look upon his now conscious partner, bewildered face cherry red, cheeks scrunched in bemused arousal. The sight was intoxicating, and the elder disjointedly chuckled deep in his chest as he rolled his hips, half stunning himself with the rush it brought, but that selfsame rush seemed to stupefy Hiccup even more. He spoke dryly between pants of pleasure.

"...You like this, right? Because -AaAaah! - It feels... Good to-me._"

Still leaden with sleep and outright floored with the situation he wanted to believe wasn't happening, the freckled boy tried to shake his head, lift his voice into something more than just pitiful mewls, to try and wrestle his tongue into syllables of protest.

"_Ja_- _Jack_."

Hearing his name in such a helplessly heated whimper brightened an already radiant grin. There was no way that Hiccup could deny their enjoyment, he could taste it bursting through his pores, smell it in the ultry haze, and if the torrid knot in his core was a good thing (as he certainly perceived it was) then the reflection he felt lodged up against his pelvis must have meant his friend appreciated it, too.

Coral fingernails buried themselves desperately into a wiry shoulder, and Jack replied in kind by shifting his palm to smooth coolly up over Hiccup's perspiration slicked side.

"Jack, please-"

"You want more?" He quizzed brazenly, but heartily complied, raked his nails ever so softly up against warm shoulder blades, cold mouth studding a bony clavicle as his hips shifted again with another ripple. The auburn head shook, unseen, jaw clenched as both his nose and eyes stung. Knuckles strained white, fingers clamped tighter, tried to push the rock solid form away.

"N- No! I- We C-Can't..."

A sympathetic hum buzzed between Jack's teeth as he dreamily nudged the dip between collarbones with his nose and planted a kiss.

"Sure you can. You're doing amazing, really! I've never done anything like this before, but you make it so easy." _

Something of a purr thrummed from him as the pleasant, shaky crash of arousal darkened his cheeks to mauve, body below squirming. The cry that broke from Hiccup was cracked and powerless as beads of sweat tracked down his brow and spine.

The ghost's beautiful face lifted to peer down hungrily at the wriggling teenager, drew close, exhaled a frozen rush over trembling lips, skimmed them with his own.

"...Is it like you used to imagine?"

"Wha- Ah?!"

Enough was enough.

"_No!_" The scream funnelled directly into Jack's mouth and caused the spectral lad to flinch back. Hiccup wrenched his left arm from under thoughtless claws, deep pink scratches scored along the inner stretch, and _shoved_ with all his might, arms braced unsteadily against sinewy shoulders, livid.

"Hiccup, what-?"

>"Stop! I can't!"

Perplexed slopes alighted Jack's saucer like stare as he watched the other violently shake.

"What are you so afraid of?" He asked quietly, tenderness cushioning the thread of bitterness that threatened to twine his tone.

You. I'm afraid of YOU-

"I?"

>Huh.

>"I'm. Uh-Not. Eighteen yet?" Hiccup quavered through his teeth. Better to give a valid reason for denial than spurn on the premise of distrust.<p>

That blizzard topped head cocked as if the human had spoken another language.

"So?"

"So... It's illegal. Against the law. We can't do this." Making out and even their... _Grinding_ was_ probably_ not seen as an offence, but Hiccup hoped that his guest wouldn't argue. It was a vain hope, as the pale lad looked over one shoulder, then another. Seemingly in search of possible intruders.

"There's no one around, though?"

Valid point, Hiccup concurred in dread as he felt cool hands start to shift again. A shudder traversed his body, and his head thrashed from side to side one last time.

"No, listen, we can't, I'm not _ready..._. "

"You're safe with me, promise I won't hurt you, never _would..._"

I just. Want to touch_-.

After so many years of his fingers passing through those he wished to reach out to, the invitation of warm skin and an active body in Jack's hands was far too appealing to let go of. Virile in his manner, the spirit pushed the shirt's hem higher still and huffed over the bare expanse, speckles sparkling under icy dust.

Semi choked protests and scrabbling hands lost under rapid, husky grunts and a thoughtless pin, inside the one place Hiccup should have been safe. The house's rooms were woefully empty, now, devoid of a hulking father or loyal friends. Alone he was, throat strained and body frail, voice consumed by fear and the lust of another.

W-why isn't he listening

I don't want this.

Someone STOP him...

"P- please, _no-!_"

* * *

><p>So... Long update. Sorry about the delay._

**Not so much to say about this other than thank you for your patience your encouragement and kind words, comments and reviews!**

**I'll catch you all much sooner next time.~**

**QG/ Bubbles. Xx**

End
file.